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THE ROAD TO THE GREY PAMIR

ANNA LOUISE STRONG

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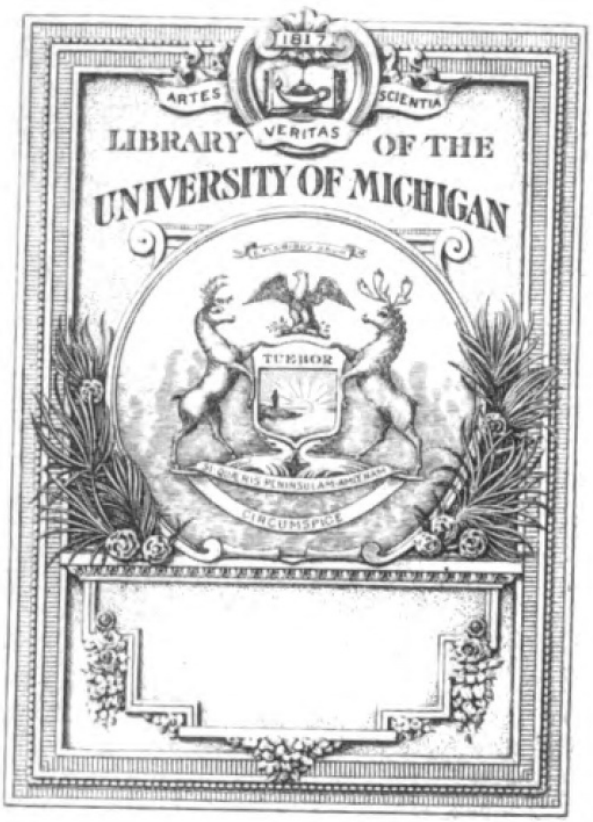

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RUSSIAN SOLDIERS GREASING UP FOR THE SUN GLARE IN THE PAMIRS

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THE ROAD TO THE GREY PAMIR

By

ANNA LOUISE STRONG, 1885-

With Illustrations

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1931

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THIS MAP SHOWS IN DETAIL THE ROUTE TAKEN BY MISS STRONG ON HORSEBACK. IT IS UNDERSTOOD, OF COURSE, THAT IN ORDER TO GET TO OSH SHE HAD TO MAKE USE OF RAIL AND AIRPLANE

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I

EASTWARD HO! INTO ASIA

MORE than eight years ago, when I first journeyed to Russia, by the slow uncertain trains in the year of the Great Famine, I said to the friends of the Quaker Relief who saw me off from Warsaw, "This time, no doubt, I shall return, but not next time. There are many roads out of Russia! The roads to the East are more enticing than the roads to the West!

"Some day," I said, "I shall go down by the route of the great deserts to China! Some day I shall strike south over the Khyber Pass to India! Some day I shall go by the world's highest mountains and most secret wastes, traveling with the nomads in the heart of Asia!"

Year after year, leaving for Moscow from Berlin, Paris, or New York, I repeated this hope, in which vague memories of Greek history from my school days mingled with pictures from Kipling's tales. When others planned to see India by the tourist's and official's route, tossed through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea on boats where dinner gongs call to full dress, I turned aside, aloof.

"When I go to India," was the suppressed thought in my heart, "I shall go south by the conqueror's way. By the way of Alexander, of Marco Polo, of Sultan

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Babur. I shall go south by the land route, through the hills of the Afghans to Hindustan."

Yet for eight years other adventures claimed me, and other duties, across which, from time to time, the glimpse of the land route over Asia to India gleamed like an intermittent star. When I lay ill with typhus in a hospital of Samara, and about me raged the Hungry Year of the Volga, the nurse one day brought me news that a special train had passed from Tashkent to Moscow, bearing the Afghan minister in the first exchange of diplomats between two nations. Even across the fever there shot a glow of enticement at the thought that the Iron Road near which I lay was the highway of traffic that led southeast through Asia.

Some years later, I heard a Russian official jokingly tell his small son of the trip to Kabul which he, thank God, had avoided! Slated for a job in the Soviet Legation to the Afghans, he rejoiced to have escaped the dingy exile.

"You know, my son, you go first to the end of the railway. And that takes five to seven days, depending on how late your train is. And then you sit on a horse all day, and at night you eat mutton. No bread, no butter, no potatoes, but only mutton. You ride another day, and eat mutton again. And you ride a third day and a third night eat mutton. So you ride for days and days, and sometimes it is so hot you cannot breathe, and sometimes the wind of the hills cuts like a knife. But however the weather

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changes, the mutton remains the same. And you sleep in dirty inns or dirtier yurts, the round felt tents of the nomads.

"After eating mutton for a month you come to a town called Kabul, which is full of bright colors and brighter smells. And you put on your properest clothes, which got all mussed on the horse, and go call on the Emir. He smokes a pipe and you smoke a pipe, and you don't say very much, for you don't know a word of his language. But if he happens to like the way you smoke your pipe, and asks you to call again, then exciting things begin to happen in London!"

"In London," puzzled the child. "But eating mutton and seeing Emirs, that 's not in London!"

"That 's high diplomacy," laughed the teasing father, touching lightly on the century-old rivalry between two empires.

Even the picture of everlasting mutton did not destroy my wish for the southern route across Asia. But the explosion of revolution in China and the task of a correspondent took me to Asia next time by the sea route of the Pacific to Shanghai. When the Wuhan government fell and the Russian advisers left for home across the northwestern China and the Gobi, a lucky chance and much persuasion enabled me to join their party. So I took my first long trek over the Asian deserts, not south from Moscow to India, but northwest from China to the Trans-Siberian Railway.

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In the autumn of 1928 the continent of Asia seemed relatively quiet, for the first time since 1914. No wars or revolutions demanded a writer's attention; diplomatic relations, renewed across ancient barriers, made travel seem possible. An airplane line connected Tashkent in Soviet Central Asia with Kabul, the capital of the Afghans; an automobile line ran south from Kabul over the borders of India.

That winter I decided to make at last the long-dreamed-of pilgrimage south through Asia. Armed first with sufficient newspaper contracts to cover expenses, and then, after anxious waiting, with three necessary visas, I set forth from Moscow. But before my airplane left Tashkent for the two days' flight to Kabul, an Emir was dethroned in Afghanistan, the tribes were at war, and all airplanes were commandeered to bring out foreigners, rather than take them in.

During this disappointing winter, while waiting in Tashkent, there came to me the project of a trip over the Pamirs, known since Marco Polo's days as the "Roof of the World," that high mid-Asian plateau whence start the three great mountain barriers of the world—the Himalayas into Tibet, the Hindu Kush into Afghanistan, and the Tien Shan, dividing Russia and China. Ever since that time it has been the mystery land of the explorer. Into the Pamirs, I well knew, only the most reckless and daring ventured. Marco himself turned back from their inhospitable wastes.

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After Marco brought back his unbelieved legends from the heart of Asia, telling of the "Roof of the World" and its long-horned rams which to-day are named for him the *ovis poli,* no European ventured there for many centuries. Then came the hardy English explorers, combining sport with extension of empire. During the World War two German agents tried these high passes from Russia to India, traveling more than a year disguised as natives, only to be caught when at last they came in sight of civilized food. In later peace times the Roosevelt and Morden–Clark Expeditions made pilgrimages thither, seeking for museums the rare specimens of these high plateaus. Such expeditions, the books record, take bearers by the score and horses by the hundred; their field of action was far beyond my endeavor.

But now, in Tashkent, I met men who spoke easily of the Pamirs, talking of radio installations and village schools and traveling courts in the distant encampments. One of them even said to me, "Why not go to the Pamirs yourself next summer? There will be a government commission from Dushembe, making a three months' survey of these high mountain peoples. Why not go with us?"

The speaker was Shirvani, a Turk by nationality, but a Soviet citizen by virtue of birth near the oil fields of Baku. Under the Tsar he had been a hot revolutionist; under the Soviet Republic he had risen to a high post in Tadjikistan, one of those many independent republics carved by the Soviet constitution

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out of the peoples of Tsarist Russia. Since the Turks and Tatars of the Caucasus are usually better educated than those of Central Asia, many of them are transferred to posts in these backward republics, with whom they are allied by race and past traditions.

The forming of Tadjikistan as an independent Soviet Republic was one of the many similar moves of the Bolsheviki towards widening their influence in the heart of Asia. The Tadjiks are a proud, ancient people, who once ruled the rich lands of Central Asia. By one conqueror after another they have been pushed from the fat soils into the hungry hills. Always they cherished their racial traditions, in poetry, song, and dance. Now they believe their day of independence has come again, after eight hundred years.

Into their new capital, Dushembe, now renamed "Stalinabad," there comes flocking a colorful assembly of naïve, wondering hillmen. They come from the furthest corners of Pamir Mountains, from buried villages up desperate torrents which no one but a Tadjik has ever been venturesome enough to climb. On foot, on horse, and on donkey they come to Stalinabad, a brand-new town some two and a half miles long, which has three-story buildings and radio loud speakers in its square. They are told over these trumpets it is "Moscow speaking," and they are overwhelmed with the magic of a government "whose voices reach the ends of earth."

"Surely we know that there are two great cities on

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earth," runs their joyous comment. "First Dushembe, and then Moscow! Of these the greater must be Dushembe. For when a man rides into it, he does not yet see where he will ride out of it. Moreover, an airplane from the sky visits it daily, and the iron horse on rails bringing tributes from far countries. Mightily in three years our city springs out of the soil, so big that people must live in three layers on top of each other, since there is not room on the earth. Some folks say, indeed, that Moscow is bigger, who talks with Dushembe in the market place. This may be so, for Moscow is the centre of the seven nations, of which we Tadjiks are one."

The land of the Tadjiks is full of all but impassable ranges. Its highest plateaus include the greater part of the famous Pamirs, where not even grass for cattle can grow. Lower down come slopes where barley grows, but not wheat; still lower comes wheat, reaped in late September and sufficing for six months' food. Yet in the lowest points of all, in the valleys at 1500 feet elevation, the climate is hot and moist enough to grow Egyptian cotton. Smothering heat to unbearable cold — these extremes are contained in the Tadjik Republic.

In the upper reaches of the land even the Tadjik populations die out, and the only inhabitants are a few scattered nomad Kirghiz, moving into the hills for a scanty summer grass crop, which may suffice for sheep, but hardly for horses. They camp in yurts; they are here to-day and yonder to-morrow. They

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have neither bread nor tea; their food is the milk of ewes and at feasts a slaughtered lamb.

Yet into even these regions penetrate commissions of the Soviet government — health commissions, education commissions, mixed governmental commissions investigating needs and establishing new institutions. With such a commission it was that Shirvani invited me to go.

"If you are serious," I replied, "I shall return from America especially for this journey." Again the dream revived of a trek across Asia. Why not go with the commission of Tadjiks as far as some spot near the southern frontier, and then find a way to drop over the border to India?

By April, when I again returned to Moscow, ready for the journey, new conditions had arisen which made this trip impossible. Stray bands from Afghanistan, composed of the dispossessed classes and adherents of the former Emir of Bokhara, were raiding across the Soviet frontier. Farther south the Indian frontier was closed, and no permits were granted to enter from the north. In Tadjikistan the project of a civilian commission surveying village life had been abandoned for the year. Shirvani himself had gone to other work elsewhere in Russia. I sent requests in several directions for information of any expeditions Pamir-wards during the summer, and turned my attention elsewhere.

Then suddenly a friend telephoned me. Dubenko, commander of the army in Central Asia, I learned,

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was planning to make an airplane trip to the Pamirs — the first time an airplane had ever visited that region. He had no objections "of principle" to my going with him. Would I care for such a journey? Going down by air, and then, perhaps, stopping over, and returning with whatever group of civil or military officials might be coming, whatever caravan of Russians, or Tadjiks, or nomad Kirghiz, might be crossing back over the mountains?

Would I? Would anyone refuse the chance to make the first trip by air to the Roof of the World? Promptly I went to consult Dubenko, and found him acquiescent, if not exactly eager. If I could be in Tashkent on the tenth of June, and if the airplane trip went through as planned, I might go with him. A five days' trip, stopping at Dushembe, and other posts *en route,* and ending at Horog, where the upper Oxus foams through mountain gorges, barely a hundred miles from India. Here I would find a post and a town, with lodging and food and horses for hire. From this point, after exploring the hills, I might return. How? With the troops, if nothing more interesting offered. Or with a trading caravan of the Gostorg.

Thus early June found me again on the Iron Road to Turkestan, in a "soft-seat" compartment of a Russian sleeping car, which I shared with three men. A Tatar opera singer was returning from a Leningrad season to his home in some village beyond the Urals. An Uzbek dyer was on his way from a Moscow trade

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school to carry the secrets of his craft to five thousand "collectivized silk weavers" in Old Margelan. And a Russian engineer was going from Samara to Aktyubinsk on business connected with the installation of a new power plant.

On the first dawn from Moscow, I was aroused from a light sleep by the movements of the Uzbek dyer who had the lower berth opposite mine. Very methodically he removed his long coat of heavy silk, folded it, and placed it on the seat. Thinking these movements presaged some form of clothing adjustment, I began to turn my face modestly towards the wall, when my attention was arrested by the next movement of the dyer. He climbed to the seat on his knees, adjusted himself neatly on top of his coat, and began to pray towards Mecca. This was not very easy, as the train was turning in various directions.

Five times daily he repeated this performance. At first I thought to withdraw, thinking he might be embarrassed at the publicity of his devotions, but I soon found that he was quite accustomed to it. Back in the "hard seats," he casually informed me, half a carload of Mussulmans were undoubtedly also praying at the same stated intervals. It was true one could not be certain of the proper direction in a train which circled for many days towards the southeast; but these difficulties were allowed for in the regulations demanded by his religion from travelers. He told me he did not mind in the least praying in front of

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unbelievers. It had been a bit difficult, if such things were to be noticed, praying in the trade-school dormitory in Moscow, in the midst of energetic atheists, who tried to propagandize him with Marxism.

Encouraged by my interest and the slow passage of time, he told me the story of his life. His boyhood had begun as a dyer's apprentice; in Tsarist days he had risen to be a merchant of dyed goods; now, under Soviet rule, he was again a dyer. Fortunately for himself he had been, not merely a merchant, but also a master craftsman, knowing all secrets of his trade as they were taught in Asia. But modern days brought German dyes, and many new methods. So the Dyers Collective of Old Margelan had sent him to Moscow, for a short course in modern dyes. He was one of the chief instructors in the Dyers Collective; all that he learned in Moscow he would teach to his fellows. Then once more the hand-woven, hand-dyed silks of Old Margelan would conquer the trade routes south towards India as of yore.

I asked what he, as a former merchant, thought of the changes made by Soviet rule. "I have less money now," he said, "but a better life." He explained: "Formerly I was a merchant, and my trade was good. But however much money I had, if I bought a ticket in a soft-seat sleeping car like this one, some Russian officer might come later who wanted a berth. And he would say to me, 'Get out of here, you dirty Sart!'

"None of this happens now. We are equal with Russians. We have our own policemen to keep

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order in our towns. That is why I say my life is better, though I am poorer. All of Old Margelan starved when the silk trade was crushed by the war. But now our silk trade starts again, and our city will be better than before."

The dyer's opinion was not shared by the Tatar opera singer. Peering outside the compartment to be sure no one could listen, he spoke to me in German, thus airing his learning and ensuring greater secrecy. *"Niemand liebt den Roten,"* he said. ("No one loves the Reds. No one!") He assured me that from end to end of the land the Reds were hated, in the cities and in the villages. He told me the land grew every day worse under their tyranny, and called my attention to the fact that they were "cutting down trains" on every railway. When I remarked that the previous autumn there had been only four trains weekly to Tashkent from Moscow, and now there seemed to be one every day, he was for a moment nonplussed, but soon repeated his assertions.

I asked about his own life, and learned that he was a talented peasant youth, from a Tatar settlement southeast of the Urals, and that he had secured, through the village authorities, the chance to study in Leningrad on a government stipend. He rose thus to become a singer in the Leningrad opera, a position never before held, he declared, by a man of his race. Since Mussulmans decry drama, few Tatars would ever have thought in the past of an operatic career. If they had thought of it, their parents and their vil-

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lage would have opposed them. And furthermore, "In the old Russia none of us would have been permitted in the Imperial Opera."

This new racial equality which had won the loyalty of the simple praying dyer even to an atheist government was insufficient to warm the soul of the opera singer. He complained rather of the smallness of government stipends, which made it necessary for his parents to send him money from home while he was studying; and of the oppression of a government which refused to send him abroad to study in Germany. He glanced with polite scorn at the oft-repeated devotions of the Uzbek. He himself had long since given up religion.

The Russian engineer from Samara was also grumbling, chiefly for fear of the poor hotel he expected in Aktyubinsk. A God-forsaken town! And he would be stuck there for several days, perhaps even two weeks, while making his report on the new power station. The way they compelled engineers to travel in these days to all the outlandish places! What did Aktyubinsk want with a power station anyway? What use had they for lights, or power, way off on the southern steppe? Why could n't he have been left at his good desk job in Samara?

To one who knows, as I do, the drab emptiness of that provincial city, Samara, it seemed incredible that there should be on earth a creature desolate enough to find in a desk job there his *summum bonum!* Better a drawing board in a tent on any desert! I asked him

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rather hotly what an engineer's job was, anyway, in Russia, and added that American engineers are more interested in building power plants than in sitting at desks.

"I know your American engineers," he answered, touchily. "They aren't engineers at all; they are nothing but workingmen. They don't care how greasy they get; they fuss with machines like any common mechanic. That's why this 'workers' government' likes them," he ended sourly.

Steadily, as our train moved southeast, the days grew hotter. At Aktyubinsk, where we got off to bid farewell to our engineer and take the air, I learned that the private car attached to the rear of our train was that of Shatoff. Bill Shatoff, known to a thousand American towns as anarchist agitator and Wobbly spellbinder, and whom I had last seen some years before organizing the oil export of Russia, was now in charge of building the Turkestan–Siberian Railway. Under him an industrial army of 40,000 men was driving rapidly northward, on a thousand-mile job of railway building to connect the cotton of Turkestan with the wheat and timber of Siberia.

It was, at the moment, the largest piece of railway construction proceeding anywhere on earth. But its size was a mere detail. The important thing about this railway is that it will change the history of Asia. The wheat and timber of the greatest plains and forests on earth will go south from Siberia to the great treeless plains of Turkestan. The Uzbeks,

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Tadjiks, Afghans even, will cease to live in mud huts and begin to live in frame houses. New cotton districts will open; new rice areas. Villages are already springing up along this route; next year they will be towns. The ancient mysterious deserts and oases of Chinese Turkestan will be brought in contact with the peoples of the north. The wild tribes of the Asian steppe, untamed since Genghis Khan, are competing for jobs on the railway and taking courses to become ticket collectors and station agents.

I ventured into the private car, and Shatoff hailed me and bade me sit down and exchange stories of where we had been since our previous meeting in Moscow. He sat in shirt sleeves with worn khaki trousers, an embroidered Turkestan skullcap perched on his head. He interlarded his talk with many oaths, chiefly cursing Moscow for delay in sending the telegram he awaited.

Shatoff's trouble was that his men were working too fast. They were getting the railroad done a year and a half ahead of the original plan, and half a year ahead of Shatoff's own revised schedule. This fact, which brought plaudits from the nation, brought also financial troubles. The men were paid on piece work, and since the job was finished ahead, payment must also be ready ahead of schedule. But payment depended on a government budget, which could not easily be rushed. Shatoff had been up to Moscow to try to hammer a few more million roubles' advance from a reluctant finance department. Otherwise he

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would have to give enforced vacation to the men whose speed was making fame for the railroad.

"God Almighty!" said Shatoff. "How easy it would be to do a job like this in America! Machinery — you 'd have a dozen companies camping on your trail trying to sell you, and your office staff taking bribes to land the order. But here, you have to place your orders a year ahead — two years if you want your stuff from abroad and need import licenses. Say, do you know how I got some measuring instruments I needed from Germany that had n't been included in the estimates? Well, the doctor said I was sick, seriously so, and the Party ordered me to a German sanatorium. I demanded a thousand dollars in foreign currency for the trip, and then I sent that thousand to Germany to buy instruments. What do I want of a German cure? Getting my instruments is the best cure for me!"

It was thirteen years since Shatoff left America, yet there must be tens of thousands there who know him. "Hardly a city of twenty thousand folks," he said to me, "but what I have been there. Hardly a trade of hard labor but what I have followed." He worked as longshoreman on the docks of New York, as pick-and-shovel man on the Erie, as painter and roof maker, as concrete mixer on the canal between Buffalo and Albany. He was a coal miner near Scranton, and a laborer on the New York water works. He was a printer, a prop shifter in a theatre, and a machinist.

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All this time he traveled from coast to coast as anarchist agitator, as national organizer for the I.W.W.'s and revolutionary lecturer, "studying railway problems," he laughed, "from side-door Pullmans." Down the Atlantic Coast, then out by Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit to Chicago, Kansas City, and points west. Los Angeles and up the coast to Seattle, and back by Minneapolis and Buffalo. Often he traveled this route, on a salary of four dollars a week for grub, begging at each lecture the railway fare to the next. Lacking a fare, he rode rods; lacking a room in which to sleep, he slept in parks on summer nights and in Salvation Army flops in winter. He remembers free speech fights in Detroit, and "old Judge Jeffries, who gave a square deal to us Wobblies." He remembers Bill Haywood, Gurley Flynn, Arturo Giovannitti. All these he recalled sitting in his private car on the hot steppes of Central Asia.

He recalled also how, when the Russian Tsar fell, he, Bill Shatoff, then in New York, went as secretary of the Inter-Party Conference of Russian Revolutionary Organizations to depose the Tsarist consul. Taking over the office, he issued passports to revolutionists wishing to return to Russia — including a certain Trotsky. He dodged a federal indictment for publishing a pacifist article of Tolstoi's, dodged a Japanese jail in Tokio, and went by Vladivostok home to Russia. Here he has held a score of jobs, changing as the needs of the times changed. Organizer of

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"Shatoff's Shock Battalions," which took city after city and formed new governments in them; defender of Leningrad; commander of a repulse against the Finns. Secretary of War in the brief-lived Far Eastern Republic, and head of the Military-Diplomatic Mission which signed the peace treaty with Japan. Secretary of Transportation in the Far East; head of State Bank branches in the south; in charge of metal import for the nation. Then, as railway construction loomed, he was made superintendent of construction of the Turkestan–Siberian Railway.

"But it's all one job, really," said Shatoff. "The job of social engineering; the job of world revolution. None of the jobs I've ever done will hurt the capitalist world as much as this Turk–Sib Railway."

Here was a road to be driven across a thousand miles of largely unknown desert, said by rumor to be impassable because of poisonous tarantulas, scorpions and *karakurts* (black spiders). Preliminary surveys occupied parts of 1926 and 1927; actual construction started in 1928. It was planned to be finished in the autumn of 1931 and to cost $106,000,000. Shatoff, by the aid of some high-handed changing of the engineer's route around a mountain range, was finishing a year and a half ahead of schedule, by May of 1930.

I spoke to Shatoff of the engineer who worried over hotels in Aktyubinsk. He laughed heartily. "Ah, but you should see the young ones," he said. "The young engineers on my road are fighting for

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the hardest jobs. They come to me when I offer promotion to soft jobs at better pay, and say: 'What have you got against me? Did n't I do this all right? Then you 've got to give me a chance at Number Seven!' That 's our hardest stretch, when we cross the Malai Sarai Mountains through a narrow canyon, and must bridge the Bizhé River eleven times in twenty miles. . . . When we get through here, we 'll have a bunch of young engineers to build anything anywhere in Russia."

So was Shatoff pioneering in the wastes of Central Asia. He spoke of the meaning of this road. It means great sawmills already springing up in the untouched forests of the north. It means that German goods to Chinese Turkestan, which now go round the world to Shanghai, and across the civil war to Kalgan, and thence by 2500 kilometres of camel road over the Gobi, will go neatly through Siberia by rail and thence by motor roads to Kashgar.

A year ago this railway was deemed a transit road, of value chiefly in connecting north with south and east with west. But already it is becoming a settler's road. Incredible wealth is found in this supposed desert. It may prove one of the richest places on earth for non-ferrous metals. Its southern end appears to be the world's original source of apples — the "Garden of Eden" where man first ate that fruit. Such is the deduction made by Professor Vaviloff, head of the Institute of Plants in Leningrad, from the great forests found here containing eighty

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varieties of wild apples. Already these are being exported for crossbreeding to strengthen with wild stock the apples of other lands.

"You know in my shack at Alma Ata," said Shatoff, "where I'm batching it now with my wife away in the States, I have a big map of the Turk-Sib Railway, marked with all the discovered resources of the region. And I sit there when the day's work is done and the midnight hour when I talk over the radio to all our stations has not yet arrived. And I look at that map, when I'm tired, and the room is dark and still.

"And the map seems to come alive! I see on it the railway running, and the wheels turning. The freight trains and the one fast passenger train daily, with sleeping cars. I see the copper factories working on one place, and the lead and zinc mines in another. I see wheat coming in along new roads. I see the Ily Valley grow green with irrigated rice fields. I see new workers' settlements go up. I even see the faces of the people, as if they were folks I knew sometime in some other life. Russians, Kazaks, Chinese, Uzbeks — they move through the stations buying tickets or working along the railroad.

"Of course I don't believe in any spiritualism. But sometimes it almost seems as if the shade of old Genghis Khan was looking at that map along with me. Wonder what he'd think if he could see what we're doing with these plains that he trampled with his horsemen?"

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BILL SHATOFF WITH MISS COGSWELL, A PRESS CORRESPONDENT, ON HIS RIGHT, THE AUTHOR ON HIS LEFT

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Shatoff turned to his gramophone. "I have a lot of funny records," he apologized. "They don't give me licenses for importing records, so I take the ones my friends smuggle to me as presents." The raucous words of an American jazz tune were shouted in the private car on the desert of Central Asia:—

"She is the meanest queen
I've ever seen,
Is Josephine."

"God Almighty!" laughed Shatoff. "Don't you wish the shade of old Genghis could listen in on that!"

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II

GRASSHOPPERS, SOLDIERS, AND SILK WEAVERS

I HATE Tashkent! It is a town where one always gets stuck much longer than one intended. When I tried to fly to Kabul I was held here two months, wondering blindly what was going on beyond that censored border into which my airplane refused to venture. It is easy to reach Tashkent, for all trains go there. It is hard to get out again, for trains are crowded, and telegraph is slow and plans not swift to make. One loses patience at the first touch of Asia, where time is not and the hours glide as the centuries. Beyond Tashkent, one has learned, perchance, to adjust oneself.

The bad news which met my arrival seemed like Tashkent's usual fatality. Dubenko told me on the second day that the flight to Horog in the Pamirs must be abandoned. The first test plane, bearing only its aviator, had landed and been unable to get off again. It seems that insufficient account had been taken of the high altitude in locating the airdrome, and there was not take-off space between the mountains. In two or three months a new landing field would be arranged, but at present the trip was canceled.

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"But now that you have come so far, it is a pity to turn back to Moscow," said Dubenko. "If you care to go to the Pamirs, you can go in with the army. The troops in those distant posts change once a year, and the relief goes in from Osh in a few days. You can travel with one of these groups — some hundred soldiers."

I asked if the presence of a woman would not prove an embarrassment. I admit that I wondered, privately, more about hardship than embarrassment. This trip into a region visited only by explorers, and spoken of with respect by the most hardy — could I keep up with the stalwart young peasant lads of an army?

Dubenko reassured me. "Several women are going, and even babies," he said. "Such of the commanding staff as are married usually take their families."

Babies in the Pamirs! Across those passes higher than Mont Blanc, camping for many weeks at 13,000 feet elevation, these hardy Russians carry babies. The wife of one of the commanders had come out to Osh to have her baby, giving birth in a hospital a few days after crossing the Pamirs! A pioneer race! To make the trek with such women and babies and their soldiers across the Roof of the World might be as exciting even as the abandoned airplane trip.

So again I waited in Tashkent, enduring its expensive and filthy hotel and rejoicing in its flower markets along the streets. By the headlines in its

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newspapers I knew that a war was on. A war not against men, but against grasshoppers. A war along the Afghan front where the winged foe was appearing in clouds to threaten the cotton harvest of Turkestan.

A serious war it was, fought with airplanes, trenches, and poison gas. Along the streets of Tashkent marched students from the agricultural schools, preceded by a band. They were mobilized out to be officers in the Anti-Grasshopper Army. Under them a peasant militia was working, digging trenches, spraying poisons, smashing hundreds of advancing bodies with their spades. Scientists in laboratories were working overtime to devise the best means of extermination; these were broadcast by radio and newspaper and by graphic picture for those who could not read. An Extraordinary Committee of Five, armed with special powers to organize knowledge, man power, and materials against grasshoppers, was for the moment supreme in Turkestan.

The enemy came flying in clouds ten miles long and two miles wide from the Afghan frontier; he darkened the sun with his masses. He was the same dread African locust that once cursed the days of Pharaoh. His normal home is the Sudan. But there come years of maximum fertility when the deadly female of the species lays many times the usual number of eggs, producing little grasshoppers of incredible voracity. In such years the clouds of locusts travel in all directions seeking green fields; they fly

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over 5000-foot ranges and across seas; for a thousand miles they may be carried by favoring winds.

Such was the winged army advancing against the cotton fields of Turkestan. It came with many victories to its credit. The previous year it had ravaged the north of Africa, and cast parts of Persia into famine. After wintering in Southern Persia and Afghanistan, it was flying northward on a 2000-mile front. It had penetrated Soviet Central Asia as far as the oasis of Khiva, a thousand miles from its point of entrance. Over this vast territory the battle raged.

Newspaper columns were given daily to the news from the front. Each day gave telegrams from a dozen regions. Old Bokhara reports 400 tons of grasshoppers killed to date, which is estimated at 32,000,000 individuals. A wire from Dushembe reports "a movement of locusts observed from Jar towards the Tadjik Republic; detachments have been sent to meet them." . . . "In Regar the six instructors who arrived yesterday have mobilized most of the available man power; peasant militia to the number of 3000 have moved to the attack." . . . "Six scouting groups of twenty horsemen each have been sent into the surrounding deserts to locate egg laying." . . . "Four companies of sixty students each are taking a week's emergency course in grasshopper fighting." . . . In Termes, "within two hours after the appearance of the young grasshoppers, 5000 peasants were mobilized; by the end of the day 8000 were

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working and had collected 12,000 bags full of the creatures."

The methods of warfare vary with the stage of the enemy's development. As long as the locust flies, little can be done; airplanes with poison gas have only a moderate success and cannot be used near populated regions. Loud shouting and cannonading, the time-honored methods of the populace, divert the locust temporarily from her path, but are in the end futile. Fortunately this adult flying locust eats little, but is preparing for egg laying, after which she dies.

Airplanes may be used to scout the direction of the enemy's flight and the place where eggs are laid. When these are discovered, ploughing kills many of them. But ploughing cannot reach the millions of desert acres. On the edges of cultivated regions the young hatch out, without wings, but hopping along the ground. They eat voraciously; in five weeks they change their skin five or six times, each time growing larger; at last they grow wings and fly to new pastures, having destroyed all behind them.

During the hopping stage they are most voracious, and can then also be most easily destroyed. Walls of sheet iron are erected across their pathway, diverting them into deep ditches where they are burned or buried. Even without sheet iron, wide ditches are effective. During some of the early stages, poisoned cotton waste scattered about the fields is a good weapon.

Tons of poisons, tons of sheet iron, thousands of

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trained workers, are needed for this serious war with grasshoppers. A war chest of several million is voted; Moscow sends seventeen additional airplanes for observation and mapping; special landing fields are prepared; all freight marked "Grasshopper" gets right of way on the railroad and goes at half rates. Five thousand soldiers from the army and many more thousand workers from factories are sent out to lead the more ignorant peasants in the fight.

War correspondents begin to return from the front. One describes the battle near Kushka. "These columns are enough to cause panic to men. One of the commanders of a battalion has been sent to the hospital for the insane at Ashkabad; he had delusions of being overwhelmed by inescapable grasshoppers. . . . For twelve days they passed our lines and there was no strength to withstand them. They lashed in the eyes the men who faced them and made them turn and flee. Clouds of gases were turned upon them and they fell to earth, but in forty-five minutes revived and continued their flight.

"Kushka is the front post; behind her are the second, third, and fourth lines of defense. All along the railway from Merv down you see them. They are war trenches with driving gutters; the iron walls shine blindingly in the sun-struck sands of Kara-Kum; but sometimes they grow gray from the locusts beating against them. If there is the slightest forward slope to the wall, the locusts pass over on each other's bodies to the cultivated lands beyond. So far the

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brunt of the fight falls on the Aviakhim battalions, the workers, students, and Young Communists. On red-hot sands without water they work all day. With burned skins in a desert renowned for sunstrokes, they fight for the oasis of Murgab far behind them."

Allies appear in the Grasshopper War. The chief natural enemy of the locust is the rosy starling. He has scented their approach and is coming south from the mountains of Samarkand. The starlings fight tirelessly till their bills stick shut from locust juices and they must have water lest they die of suffocation. Their helpers, the native peasants, set out barrels of water for starlings to drink.

The Mohammedan mullahs tell the natives that locusts are sent by God to punish their obedience to the Bolsheviki. Only by barrels of holy water can they attract the starlings. The Young Communists retort by attracting starlings with unblessed water. This adds a touch of amusing color to the fight. Another touch is added by the rumor which starts along the border that "the locusts are sent against us by the English, who buy them at eighty kopeks a pound for this purpose."

Thus the Grasshopper War was waged. By the time I came back from the Pamirs it was over, leaving noticeable but not catastrophic losses on the cotton fields of Central Asia. The richest valley, Fergana, it never reached at all.

Meantime Dubenko said to me, as I waited disconsolately in Tashkent: "Would you care to take

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an air trip to a summer camp of the army? The chief of the air forces is going over for a day's work there." So casually was the invitation made that I was somewhat overwhelmed to discover that the camp was fourteen hours distant by rail and then some fifty kilometres back in the hills. I went by air, a pleasanter method in the heat of Central Asia.

At five in the morning we left the Tashkent airdrome, soaring aloft to a height of eleven thousand feet to pass a range of snow peaks. Descending again, we marked how the snow gave place to desert hills, and these in turn to the green of irrigation. Shortly after seven we came to what was called an "airdrome," but in reality was only a flat expanse of desert from which rose two tiny columns of smoke built by Red soldiers to mark our way. We landed, set a guard for the day and night over the airplane, and took the Ford touring car that had come down from camp to meet us. It was a two hours' ride by atrocious roads in great heat.

My companion had formerly spent several years fighting bandits in this region and was now revisiting it for the first time since the end of the civil war. "It is a new country," he said. "You see that black-haired girl waving at us from the roadside, and those youngsters making imitation salutes? When I was here before, the village doors were walled shut in terror, and stray shots from guerrillas were our roadside greeting. In those days the 'bands' had most of the peasants with them, either through fear or racial

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allegiance; but now the peasants are with us, and help us chase the few bandits that arise."

During a stop for repairs, he had tea at the inevitable *chai-khana,* the carpeted tea-platform of Central Asia; and a crowd of women with many babies clinging to them invited me to the rear of the house to the "women's quarters." They were all unveiled, a change indeed in the past few years of Central Asia. They showed me their spring harvest of silk cocoons and pointed woefully to the number of dead silkworms smitten by an infection before they could weave their costly shrouds.

Two Uzbek girls now approached us and begged for a ride in our automobile to a village on our road where they wished to visit their parents. Their husbands were with them and seconded their request. There was room in our auto, so the two girls mounted with ecstatic grins, while other women, who had perhaps merely failed to think of a similar request in time, stared in envy. Two unveiled Uzbek damsels, riding in a car with a Russian commander and a soldier chauffeur, and waving their hand in triumph at every Uzbek peasant we passed! Was the presence of one American woman a sufficient chaperon? Certainly two years ago it would not have been so considered. The males of their families would have torn them in pieces for the shame they brought the household. But now the Uzbek husbands made of the army commander a convenience for their wives' visits to parents.

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In the heat of noon we came into the mountain camp by the side of a turbulent stream. Groups of men in bathing trunks sat in the shade of the trees or played basket ball. The six hours daily allotted to military training had already been finished — from six to twelve at noon. For the rest of the day the men were free to wear what costume they chose, and bathing suits won the majority. Later in the afternoon I saw the various "classes in politics" sitting in groups of thirty under the trees with instructors, discussing the difference between state farming, collective farming, and communes. From a distance one hardly knew whether they were Uzbeks or Russians, so brown were their bodies burned by the tropical sun.

Lunch time! The men gathered in open-air pavilions, each seating a thousand men, for the inevitable Russian dinner of cabbage soup, meat, potatoes, and black bread. Members of officers' families ate in another but similar pavilion, where the meal must be paid for. Soldiers also could eat here, if they chose; but except when they had visitors they preferred the free food of their own pavilions. The soldiers had better music; each regiment had its band which played at ten meals a week, while in our smaller pavilion two stringed instruments sufficed.

The chief of Political Instruction sat beside me at lunch. "The men are fed by the army," he explained, "but our dining pavilion is run by the Coöperatives of Andizhan. They give us three hot meals daily

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for thirty rubles a month. The portions are large; if you have a family of five, three portions will do. The Andizhan Coöperatives lose money on us; but that is considered part of their 'social work.'"

In the cool of early evening I strolled through the camp and saw many more evidences of the "social work" done by civilian organizations to help the army. The camp was charmingly laid out, taking advantage of hillsides and stream. The torrents was diverted to form several shower baths, one fountain, and two cement swimming pools. Alleys of three-year-old poplars served as boundaries between regiments, of which several were camped here. The tents were raised high above foundations of sun-dried mud, rounded into walls and whitewashed. Inside each tent, on a wooden floor, were sleeping cots for ten men.

The real feature of the camp life was the club buildings. Hundreds of them, of all shapes and sizes, accommodating from fifteen to a hundred men. They had been planned by the men in conference with their commanders; their civilian "patron organizations" had made donations to them; and the men themselves had built them, vying with each other in decoration schemes and comforts invented. Little summerhouses under trees served tea for three kopeks a glass; little square boxes of houses, gayly painted and set in formal gardens, offered various reading matter and posters. One regiment put all its club buildings four feet down into the earth for greater

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coolness; another secured the same results by double-roofing. Others diverted little streams from the general river to irrigate small plots of grass and hopeful attempts at flowers.

Everywhere in the afternoon were men working on club houses, putting up ornamental gates, painting posters, finishing the second swimming pool. The camp was only in its second year and the state gave only $10,000 to furnish it. The men themselves had given work worth several hundred thousands; and their civilian "patrons" and friends had donated materials. The commander of one regiment thus indicated the proportion between the government funds and the voluntary. "I got from the state $500 for outfitting our club; our 'patron factory' gave us $25,000, of which most was spent on our winter club, but $7000 went to fix our summer camp."

Who were these lavish "worker patrons"? Chiefly the Uzbeks in cotton gins and cottonseed-oil factories of the Fergana Valley. Not Russians, but brown-skinned Asians voted to become "patrons" of such and such a regiment. Perhaps they voted it from trade-union funds; or perhaps they voted to give "four hours' overtime work." In any case, these Russian army boys were dependent for their club comforts on the votes of Uzbek workers.

"A large part of our task," said the Chief of Political Instruction, "is to organize friendly contacts with the neighborhood and get many patrons." The task of a good commander is not merely to teach

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military tactics, and not merely to organize good social life for his men. Unless he secures good contacts among the workers, his organization suffers, and his reputation loses. A good regiment commander organizes visits by his men to factories, and return visits of factory workers to his army camp. He starts study circles on military subjects in the factories, and his staff volunteer to do the teaching.

"When ploughing time comes and the native peasants buy European ploughs through their coöperatives, but do not know how to use them, a good commander will send volunteer detachments of soldiers, themselves peasants from European Russia, to act as instructors of ploughing in Uzbek villages. Still more, for the hundreds of peasants who have never had a horse, and who farm painfully with spades and mattocks, a good commander organizes horse assistance, planning the work of his animals so that he can free some for ploughing. He stirs up interest among the agricultural-implement coöperatives, and gets the loan or hire of implements, even of tractors. Later, perhaps these same peasants, or their sons in the factories, vote to become his patrons."

"The political lessons are more important than the military," said one regiment commander frankly. "The latter we can always shove in somewhere. But the political lessons must be given in accord with local events. Just now, we are all helping, of course, in the Grasshopper War."

I went in the evening to see the "movies" in a great

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open square in the darkness. Here I met also a class of thirty miners, who had come from a near-by coal mine for a month's course in politics under army instructors. All during summer various civilians camp with the army. Some 1500 Young Pioneers come for a month's vacation, seeking chiefly a healthy vacation from the heat of Central Asian cities. They study surrounding nature and the life of the army while an army doctor cares for their health.

For the spring opening of the camp, the commander told me, over a thousand civilian guests came on foot and by horse cart from a radius of more than a hundred miles, to share in the celebration. For three days they camped with the army and the army fed them. These brown-skinned Uzbek peasants and workers, patrons of various regiments, elected by their factories and villages as delegates for this visit, poured through the camp, attended club meetings and cinema, made suggestions and criticisms about the club arrangements and the new facilities needed. Anyone who can imagine this picture in contrast with the usual habits of white armies among brown-skinned populations will understand something of the revolution occurring in Asia.

Even with such excursions at hand, the wait in Tashkent grew dull. My train acquaintance, the praying dyer, had urged me to visit the Silk Makers Collective of Old Margelan. This was en route to Osh, whence the army caravan would start. I decided to start

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ahead of Commander Lavroff and his family, and stop over with the silk weavers, joining the commander on a following train. It was with him that I was to make the trip into the Pamir posts.

After a ghastly jam at the Tashkent railway station, in which each person showing his tickets held up the line for no apparent reason, while corners of wooden fruit boxes tore my clothes, came an evening of enchantment. I drew by luck a sleeping-car compartment alone, and with window opened I watched the full moon shining over irrigated cottonfields and deserts. Loud songs of crickets rose in the air, which was softened by evening to a delicious coolness and fragrant with the breath of wide-growing summer.

Next morning we rode through an increasingly hot landscape, not unlike the inland valleys of Southern California, where sagebrush alternated with irrigated cotton, and distant snow peaks were veiled in haze. But very unlike California were the jostling colorful crowds at the stations, in bright turbans and long flapping dressing gowns known as khalats. Unlike California's trim motor roads was the track I later took to Old Margelan, jolting in an ancient hack amid smothering clouds of dust.

Water was the life of this region. Every muddy irrigation ditch a yard wide was an excuse for a chai-khana in which the population rested, reclined, talked, and drank tea. Families set little wooden cots lengthwise in these ditches and crowded on them to dangle their feet in the coolness, exposing their

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bodies to the slight breath of air that follows even such tiny streams. Little naked boys were splashing. Beyond these ditches rose uneven elevations of beaten earth dignified by the name of gardens, boasting a rug on the ground and a dust-laden shade tree above. At crossroads the male population of whole settlements sometimes lounged under a single shade tree.

Thus I drove past the Regional Executive Committee, the Regional Children's Commission, the new Silk Filature Mills, the dingy office of the Social Insurance, and came through the market to the Regional Union of Handicraft, to which my silk dyer belonged. They sent for him and he was a trifle surprised, but rather proud, to see me, and exhibit me as an American visitor come all the way to Old Margelan. He introduced me to the president of the Silk Makers Artel (production collective), Riabof-Muksunof, a former revolutionist from Russia. The latter at once asked if I could help him buy some German books.

"Books of technical explanation with pictures," he said. "We have some machines of the English system, 220 spindles in all, but no manual of instruction. I myself am an administrator; I knew nothing previously of silk making. The members of our artel are handicraftsmen; once Old Margelan was famous for its silks. Little by little we introduce some machinery, but we need explanations. Technical books on silk dyeing we also need — serious books, used by specialists.

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"There are 16,000 silk-making artisans in Old Margelan," he continued. "Of these 7500 are now in our artel. Our dyer told you 5000? But since he went to Moscow we have been able to accept 2500 more members. It is all a question of how much credit we get; all the artisans wish to join us. But we must limit ourselves by our credits and materials."

We visited houses of spinners, weavers, and dyers in the late afternoon. Cavern-like huts, with floor of beaten earth, and a jagged hole in the mud roof to let in light near the loom or dyeing bench. A wooden platform at one end piled with sleeping pallets. "Not so bad in summer," said Riabof-Muksunof. "Cooler than in the street. But in winter it's very miserable, damp, chilling. Yet the artisans work here fourteen hours a day winter and summer. In the new Silk Filature Mills they have the eight-hour day and all sorts of social insurance. But most of the skilled artisans prefer their independence at home; it is chiefly unskilled girls who go to the mills.

"Little by little we hope to unite more artisans and get credits. We hope then to set up our own machines under collective ownership, where the artisans may grow used to a factory type of labor. At present the Turkestan Silk Trust exploits us, driving our prices down to make up the deficits on their eight-hour factory system. But eventually we shall get credit direct from the State Bank ourselves and not through the Turkestan Silk. Each year our status improves. Two years ago artisans were not

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even citizens; now they vote, elect members to the city soviet, and make demands." . . . I could not know if Riabof-Muksunof's accusations and hopes were true, or if he were the spokesman of artisans vainly opposing the factory advance.

As we went from house to house, our dyer shouted each time through the closed door. Sometimes a little girl peeped out to answer, "No one but women are home." It was then not proper for us to enter. On other occasions we were admitted to see a man sitting at a loom, primitively weighted and balanced in its motions by various sizes of stones. The dyer showed us his own shop, where his brother and son were stamping bright colors with blocks on the cream-colored silk. He gave us tea, and *plov,* the main dish of Central Asia, rice cooked with small pieces of meat and fat. His wife did not appear to greet us, but remained in the woman's quarters. But he showed us his other treasures, chiefly an ancient Koran, four hundred years old, in gold-shaded lettering on parchment, and exquisitely illustrated.

"I paid for this 600 rubles in 1914, when I was a merchant," he told us. And Riabof-Muksunof informed me, while the dyer held himself proudly, that the latter had received the name Abdullah-Kari — reader of the Koran — in token of a pious education.

I went for the night to the home of Riabof-Muksunof, in Skobelef, the old Russian town built for the conquerors a few miles across the valley, shabby and down at heel under its splendid trees, but with "a

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human climate," according to my host. "With its abundant shade and its breeze down the ravines, its temperature may be thirty degrees lower than sun-baked Old Margelan in the hottest days." Here in two rooms, where the president of the Silk Makers Collective lived with his wife and daughter, he told me his life story, and discussed theories of government.

"I am not a Bolshevik," he said, "but a former revolutionist of a different party, disagreeing with the Bolsheviki on many points. I was first jailed at seventeen years, and for eighteen years I lived an illegal life. Once I spent two and a half years in solitary confinement. Sometimes men go crazy from that; if that doesn't happen, then in the first six months they lose all sense of reality and live in a dream.

"The thing I criticize in the Soviet power in this region is the low price they give cotton growers and silk makers. The market price for cocoons is fifty rubles a pood, but the government price is twenty-three rubles. The peasant is bound to the government by debts and must deliver his cocoons to it. From this come many rows and scandals. However, one must take into account how the government subsidizes this whole region, giving new schools, more in proportion even than in Russian provinces, and issuing endless loans to poor peasants which it knows will never be paid."

At this point in our talk a hurried rap came at the

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door and a man entered to talk hastily with my host, and then withdrew. "He wants to borrow our automobile," was the explanation. "All the government offices borrow it; we never get any use of it ourselves. He must go in haste to-night to a town in the hills and bring down the judges who have just issued a death sentence against a group of murderers. These murderers have plenty of friends, and it is well to get the judges back to town quickly."

Thus I learned the tale of a religious riot and murder in a little hill settlement of Mohammedans. The village proudly possessed a sacred grave, said to be some relative of Mohammed. "All the villages have some relative of Mohammed," remarked Riabof-Muksunof. There came to this village a Trotskyist, exiled here to some small job of cultural work. This ardent atheist announced that there was nothing holy about this grave, and that it was probably no grave at all, but an empty hole, and proceeded to prove his case by opening the spot. A band of villagers attacked him, cut him to pieces, and carried the pieces away as souvenirs, saying, "Thus shall it be done to those who attack religion." Thereupon an investigating commission came, located some of the murderers, finished the opening of the "grave" in the presence of a large crowd, and proved that there was nothing whatever in it, and followed this up by a spectacular public trial. They had apparently succeeded. All the same, they wished to leave the spot quickly.

"However," said Riabof-Muksunof, "the country

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is really very quiet now. A few years ago the peasants supported the bands. Now they report bands to the government and help in their capture. This little religious flare-up is an exception. The peasant wants peace and order; the moment a guerrilla war starts everyone takes the peasant's horses and he can't move out of doors. Then he starves. The peasant believes now that the Soviet power can give him order, and he supports it for that."

I asked Riabof-Muksunof if there had been large massacres of peasants by Bolshevik troops in the Fergana Valley, as reported in books I had seen abroad. He looked puzzled. "No special ones that I know of," he said. "There was plenty of killing on both sides during the civil war, and the war with the bands. Hundreds and hundreds of red agitators, both Uzbek and Russian, went to certain death by torture in the efforts to 'reason' with the bands. Sometimes these efforts succeeded; it was always worth trying by the sacrifice of one emissary to bring peace to a whole neighborhood. But mostly the bands cut red stars and sickles and hammers on the breasts of these victims, and cut off ears and nose and mutilated them in many ways before they killed them. At last the Reds in this region grew strong enough to use force instead of reasoning. Naturally they killed lots of those bandits then."

The following day I took the train, on which I met Commander Lavroff, his wife and baby, and several other persons of his party. Together we

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rode to the end of the Fergana Valley at the city of Andizhan. And together we took the autobus which brought us, late at night, to the town of Osh. Here was to start the caravan for the High Pamir.

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III

THE PARADISE CALLED OSH

MELODIOUSLY-NAMED Osh has an ancient fame in Asia, however little it may be known to other continents. Some claim that King Solomon founded it, and others the Macedonian Alexander — these being the favorite founders chosen by Central Asian towns. Others, indeed, claim that Adam himself founded Osh as a substitute for his lost Eden, but in this claim one suspects the real-estate promoter's brag.

We came into Osh in the late evening and found chiefly a tangle of bad roads dotted poorly with lights. At the army post we were told we might camp in the hospital, which was almost empty and undergoing repair. Commander Lavroff promptly took the one vacant room for himself and family. Work comes first in Russia, and Lavroff needed a place to make plans and do business. The three less important women, including myself, were offered the use of a corridor.

We picked out such cots as were stacked in the corridor; most of them were plain board bunks, without mattresses. There was one cot with a sagging wire netting; the Russian women did not desire it, as their bedding was not thick enough to pad it. My sleep-

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ing bag was thick and, swung on the wire, made an excellent hammock. Two or three doctors who had offices in the building passed through our corridor at all hours without warning, and in the morning hours there were occasional soldier patients; otherwise we were unmolested except by the flies. There was no place but the floor to store our baggage, but the women told me not to worry — "Sneak thieves are afraid to come into army buildings." For the first time in Central Asia, I might even say in Russia, I left my possessions scattered about, with all doors open, and went off to wander about the town.

Encircled by ranges, some of them snow-capped, Osh is a ragged mountain town full of trees and muddy streams which merge at the valley's bottom in the turbulent Ak-Bura River. Its elevation of 4030 feet brings a refreshing coolness after the stifling Fergana Valley. Sultan Babur said of Osh: "No city in all Fergana is its equal for climate and charm," and he should have known, for he was born here, and for most of the years of his life he fought back and forth across Fergana as far as Samarkand, retaking and relosing his kingdom to the advancing hordes of Uzbeks. At last he gave up and went south for his empire, crossing by Kabul into India and founding the Mogul dynasty at Agra, where he died in 1530. It is a long time ago, but the Uzbeks who drove him out are still the dominant folk in the land about Fergana, though the Mogul Empire of India has passed like a dream.

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The facts about Babur I found in the *Encyclopædia Brittanica* in Moscow. In Osh they knew only — and everyone told me — the compliment given by Sultan Babur to the climate of Osh. But who Babur was, and of what lands he was Sultan — these are unimportant facts that Osh has long forgotten.

All about Osh the land is drenched in history. Empire after empire has risen and died and been buried, leaving but crumbling monuments of dynasties and religions. More than fifteen hundred years ago there was a Zoroastrian empire called Maveranager, located on the trade route from Arabia to China. The broken remains of one of its capitals are found at Uzgen, not more than a long day's horseback ride from Osh.

The proper mood in which to approach Osh is one of cheerful belief in all legends, and to such visitors many marvels are revealed. One learns that King Suleiman, weary with his long journey (and it must indeed have been a long trip here from Jerusalem), said to his oxen, "Ush," or "Osh," which is Central Asiatic for "Whoa." Such is the reputed origin of the name.

Above the town is a picturesque cliff known as Suleiman's Throne, where the sainted monarch sat to rule and was later buried. Some say, indeed, that all this applies to Prophet Suleiman, not King Suleiman, but after so many years there seems little difference.

It is quite understood that the troops of Macedo-

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nian Alexander and the great conqueror himself were slain below this mountain — whatever else you may read in textbooks of Greek history. A giant snake came forth, sent by Mahomet and the Prophet Suleiman, and devoured the encamped armies. If chronology on this point seems a bit strained, one must remember that the prophets live in Paradise where time is of no moment. In this matter, as in others, Osh is said to resemble Paradise.

If skeptics survive to reach Suleiman's Throne, they may easily verify the fact that Suleiman knelt and prayed here, for the holes left by his mighty knees are still to be seen in the rock of the summit, and the smaller abrasions made by his tears as he wrestled in prayer are also still visible. Day after day by thousands the faithful come to this place to be healed of diseases. Legs and arms thrust into these holes are cured of rheumatism, and those who stand on their head are healed of scalp diseases. Here also is a sacred slab of stone on which women squat to be freed from the shame of barrenness; it is long since polished by women's bodies to the brightness of a mirror, and every morning one may see processions of thick-veiled Uzbeks, or the unveiled Kirghiz women of the plains, toiling upwards to reach it.

For those who disbelieve in ancient miracles there are modern marvels. Last year an all-Russian session of geologists meeting in Tashkent made a special pilgrimage to Osh and the surrounding regions to study what is one of the two great radium deposits

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of the world. The other similar radium mine is in Czechoslovakia, where the health resort of Tokhimstel has been founded. A similar health resort is predicted for Osh, replacing — or shall we say supplementing — the holes of the holy Suleiman. It is already known that in mines near by the miners get cured of rheumatism and similar diseases; both air and water are radioactive.

Meantime Osh has already more modest health resorts, based on its climate. Under the trees of its ragged streets are scattered *dachias* — summer homes where rooms are for rent to seekers of coolness. Many open-air restaurants serve eggs and coffee to resorters, and once a day condescend to provide a real lunch. Little booths sell ice cream and cold drinks at rough tables. By day the alleys of tall poplars lead down to the river bank for splashing picnics. By night, the unclouded moon entices to the summer garden of the Building Workers, a large and flourishing organization putting up many new buildings.

At the edge of the town is the Rest House for workers from mines and cotton gins and silk mills. From all over Uzbekistan they come, three hundred and fifty at a time, and three thousand during the season. All nationalities mix here equally — Russians and Kirghiz, Tatars and Uzbeks, all sent by the Social Insurance of Uzbekistan. Two kilometres from town the Koumiss Sanatorium, run by the Osh Health Department, draws visitors from far-away

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Russia, to breathe its high air and drink the fermented mare's milk — Koumiss.

But Osh to-day, as of yore, is a centre for more than health seekers. It is, and has been for centuries, the caravan town whence camels and donkeys and horses set forth for Kashgar and China, and south to Tibet and Hindustan. Even the coming of the railway to Andizhan in the valley below has not changed the caravan centre from Osh to the railway. For the mountains about Osh are plentifully covered with grass, and camping costs nothing. But most of a trip's profits might well be squandered for the cost of hay in Andizhan.

The presence of grass near Osh, and on the trail from Osh through the passes, is more important than the casual visitor guesses. For centuries gone this simple fact has drained far-away Europe of gold and heaped gold up in India, so that Indian princes became world-famous for their treasuries of precious metal, though India has no gold mines of her own. The reason lies in the grass of Osh and the high breathless pass of the Karakorum.

Since time unknown a three-cornered trade has been carried on between Chinese Turkestan, India, and the land now known as Russia, which leads to Europe. The exports of Chinese Turkestan are heavy — sheepskins, furs, raw cotton. The road from Kashgar to India is long and high and most of it grassless. To go and return takes for a caravan an entire season, and much of the transport must be

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wasted carrying fodder. But the road to Russia by Osh has grass all the way, and the hardy animals travel without cost to their owners. To Osh and back to Kashgar the trip may be made two or three times in a long summer season.

So the heavy export from Kashgar goes regularly to Russia, locking these two countries in a natural economic alliance. But Kashgar desires the silky and light-weight cotton weaves of India; her luxury imports come from the south. So Chinese Turkestan carries heavy wares to Russia, and takes her pay in gold, which she carries in turn to India. Even the grassless pass of the Karakorum is insufficient bar against valuable luxury cargoes.

Thus through the Middle Ages the gold of the Mediterranean Basin found its way by this three-cornered trade through Kashgar to India. Other roads there were also, through Persia and Afghanistan. But in modern days, the opening of sea routes made these unimportant. In modern days the gold of India goes back to England for machines and manufactures. But the Kashgar route was so far inland that the sea routes hardly competed.

Another ancient cause has made Osh a caravan town and a horse market. From Chinese Turkestan and even from China proper, as far as Kansu and Shensi, the Mussulman pilgrims go to Mecca. To-day they follow two routes — by the Chinese Pamir to India and thence by ship, or by Osh to the Russian railway lines and the Russian ships. They come on

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very good horses from the remote parts of Chinese Turkestan, traveling light with their valuables. They sell their horses where they embark at Dergai in India, or at the Russian railway at Andizhan. Most of the pilgrims are very old men, wishing before death to see Mecca, and knowing themselves assured of Paradise if they die on the way. Half of them never return; those who do are impoverished and buy only very bad horses to stagger home. Hence in all the region about Osh one may buy good Kashgar horses; they have a peculiar gait known as *yurga,* much easier and more lasting than the European trot. The gait has been borrowed by Siberians and also by Cossacks; it is a rolling motion which at first is pleasant, but which, by constantly turning the body, causes at last sharp pains at the waist.

Yet one more exchange is made between Kashgar and Russia. Though the whole of Chinese Turkestan has only some three million people, yet so sparse are its oases that even this small number is too many. Wages are very low, and peasants are chronically starving. Every summer they go as cotton pickers to the Fergana Valley. Twenty, thirty, and even forty thousand set out on foot from the regions around Kashgar, selling all they own, and taking a parcel of food and a walking stick. They cross the passes with the first spring and come in summer to Fergana: it is a month's hike even for the hardy. In autumn they go back, with three to five hundred rubles, for they are the best and most industrious

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workers known to Fergana. In Tsarist times some two or three million rubles were thus yearly exported. The Soviet Republic, desperately desirous of retaining gold, makes this export illegal. But, needing the work of these Kashgarliks, even the Soviet Republic makes exceptions, allowing a small cash export and encouraging these workers to take back cotton goods. Thus those who walk from Kashgar to Fergana often return with a laden donkey. This also makes of Osh a market.

So pressing is all this trade that it must go on, even illegally. Across all customs barriers it finds a way. During the Russian revolution and civil war Chinese Turkestan was beggared; its products accumulated and cheapened or spoiled. Trade revived at once with the return of peace and order. When the breaking of relations between the Soviet government and the Nanking government of China threatened again a bar to trade between Osh and Kashgar, the Chinese merchants of Chinese Turkestan brought pressure on their governor. "You are alone," they said. "You can't get money from Nanking, but only from your own province. Will you beggar your own population for the cause of Nanking?" Arrangements were made for the exchange of five consuls between Chinese Turkestan and Russian Turkestan, without reference to the quarrels of Moscow and Nanking.

There is one type of exchange across the border which tries to avoid Osh, since it is always contraband.

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Various forms of opium and other narcotics slip through the high passes of the Pamirs from Afghanistan to Kashgar. All governments concerned forbid this, but it happens. Mountains are desolate, and nomads and local officials are bribable. Once each year the governor of Kashgar makes a great demonstration of burning confiscated opium. It is said that the Chinese soldiers look on sadly as it burns, thinking how much joy is going up in a smoke that benefits no one. The burning occurs once yearly, and is only a face-saving gesture.

From all this it is seen that Osh is a place of importance, affecting even distant lands which have never heard its name. Under the Soviet Republic, Osh has become even more than a caravan centre; it is the capital of Southern Kirghizia. The vast lands of the Kirghiz, now formed into an autonomous Soviet republic, are divided by high ranges of mountains. To go from Osh to the Kirghiz capital at Frunze takes two or three days around by train, or as many weeks by horse across the passes. Therefore the southern districts, centering in Osh, have their own regional government with considerable powers.

As I strolled down the central dusty avenue of Osh on the morning of my first day I saw signs of a public gathering. Around an unkempt white building, whose sign made clear that on ordinary days it was the Club of the Red Army, many Kirghiz were collected. Outside under the trees were tethered some two score

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horses, and more were steadily arriving at a long lope down the street. The People's Court of Southern Kirghizia was meeting to try a recently captured gang of thirty bandits.

Even the usually meek peasants and herdsmen had at last revolted against the raids of these bandits and the constantly required tribute, and the government police had been helped by a posse of five hundred natives, who know these mountains as no Russian ever can. During the preceding winter the bandits had killed a police agent who was on their trail, but in spring the posse of peasants rounded them up in the hills and nearly tore them to pieces. To the native mind such a lynching was much less dangerous than a trial; for after an open trial who knows what vengeances may follow testimony? The police, however, saved the bandits and got them to jail and to court.

The shabby hall which I entered was the typical dusty club room of a small Russian town. On a rough stage the banner of the Red Army Club proclaimed that "the Club is the Hearth of Culture"; beneath this at a red-draped table sat the court, convened here for a special "demonstration trial" on account of the wide popular interest. The "People's Judge" was a Russian, evidently a factory worker in his late thirties, looking most informal in a worn Russian blouse with touches of embroidery at throat and wrists; it was left open at the neck for coolness. Beside him were the two "People's Co-Sitters," who

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by Soviet law are chosen from various workers' and peasants' organizations and have equal voice with the judge in the case on which they sit. These were Kirghiz, one a coal miner from a near-by mine, the other a woman from the Osh Silk Filature Mills, with a red kerchief about her black hair.

The backless benches of the room were jammed with Kirghiz, bronzed sturdy peasants who had only recently settled down to a crude farming, and now resented the bandit raids of the nomads from whom they sprang. Here was not only a struggle staged between law and lawlessness; it was also a struggle between the ancient life of the hills and the newborn life of farms. Sprinkled among the audience were a few Russians, men and women, and two or three native women of Osh whose heavy black veils proclaimed them Uzbeks.

As if in the first three rows of the audience sat the bandits, thirty in number, brown-faced under black-and-white skullcaps. Only three guards were stationed among them with rifles; it seemed a small number if desperate men should make a combined break for freedom. The men might well be desperate; for this was likely to be "a shooting case." Between the bandits and the stage sat, on the left, the three prosecutors, and on the right the three defenders.

"Here are thirty men," said the judge to the audience and the bandits. "We must know about each, whether and to what extent each took part in these

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crimes. Who is the most, and who is the least, guilty?"

A short time later, still very informal, the judge was admonishing one of the bandits as a teacher or parent speaks to a culprit. "You see," he said, "when you begin to lie, you make nothing but trouble for us and yourself. Your story went all right till you began lying, and then we had to call a lot of witnesses to prove what you yourself now admit and could have told us. Why not realize this, and tell us straight from the beginning?" It was an amazing approach to a man who might be judged worthy of shooting.

Still later the judge was arguing with one of the bandits. "Now, really, you, an accomplished brigand, expect us to believe that you just met this fellow on the road and took him along on your raid as a sort — well, a sort of witness! Even among your own men, we know that those who are weak are not taken on such depredations. And you want to tell us that you just casually invited this stranger? . . . Now tell us — how many men went on the raid that night?"

There was not the slightest prestige of law, or formality of the court. Without rules of evidence, without pleas of "guilty" or "not guilty," without any prisoner's bar setting the bandits off from ordinary people, the judge and the prosecutors and defendants were trying to get a clear story for themselves and the audience. The result was likely to be some executions and a large number of jail sentences.

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Court recess came soon, and I wandered again down the dusty street, passing the Customs House which marks Osh as a point of entry from China, and coming at last to the building of the Central Executive Committee of Southern Kirghizia. A throng of both Russians and Kirghiz were coming and going. I asked for Yooldashef, the president of the district, and found a taciturn but pleasant Kirghiz, a former peasant who learned to read after the revolution and became first a teacher and then a ruler. His command of Russian seemed not very good; he called the vice president, a Russian, and nodded while the latter explained to me the organization of Kirghizia.

Southern Kirghizia, he said, has 470,000 inhabitants, of whom perhaps 40 per cent are nomad. It is divided into ten "rayons," of which three are devoted to farming, and the rest are partly farming, partly nomad herders. The people are 79 per cent Kirghiz, 15 per cent Uzbek, and 6 per cent European, by which name Central Asia always lumps Russians, Jews, and an occasional Lett or German.

How far was the government native, I asked. He told me that the village governments were, of course, all native. In the "rayon" governments the vice president was invariably Russian, but he was usually the only Russian in the executive committee. The local civil service was entirely native, except for posts in bookkeeping, finance, and medicine, for which as yet there were few qualified Kirghiz. For these

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posts also Kirghiz were now studying, and when they graduated would be given jobs.

In the "Okrug" government, centred in Osh, and which had been formed only three months before by the union of two former counties into the Okrug of Southern Kirghizia, there were many Russians. The Okrug Congress of Soviets contained a few Russian delegates from the town of Osh, the mines, and some Russian farm communities; otherwise the delegates were Kirghiz. But in the civil service, the Health, Labor, Finance, and Water Departments were under Russians; while Education, Police, Courts, and Agriculture were under Kirghiz commissars.

"The chief struggle in Kirghizia," continued the vice president, while Yooldashef nodded his head, "is against the old tribal organization, and their chieftains, the manaps. Our first step in this direction is to divide our village soviets on geographical lines rather than tribal lines. Thus we still have many village soviets which unite groups of the same tribe scattered over fifty kilometres of territory; in their midst are perhaps villages of other tribes united in a different local soviet. This is an antiquated organization, inefficient and tending only to strengthen the old tribal customs and the tribal rule of the manap. We fight against this tendency and try to divide the local governments geographically.

"The manaps have always exploited the poorer Kirghiz, extorting both money and obedience. They claim rights in pasture lands and charge their subject

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herders for their use. In the valleys of Kirghizia, private right to land existed as late as 1927, ten years after it was abolished in most of the Soviet Union. Even now cases of land sales occur, which are of course, illegal. But in the hills, the land reform has not even yet taken place, and private property still clearly exists. There we try to introduce 'pasture reform,' taking away the control of pastures from the manaps.

"We fight the manaps chiefly by economic means," he continued, "by giving credits to collective groups of the poorer Kirghiz. We organize Self-Help Committees. This spring we gave 1,600,000 rubles to finance the spring sowing in Southern Kirghizia. Some of this was for seed and tools, given on loan till harvest; the rest was for larger implements and livestock, a loan for several years. Collective farms are spreading very fast among the Kirghiz, as everywhere in the Soviet Union.

"Among the nomads progress is naturally slower; they live a very poor life, almost entirely on their own products, and use few city-made goods. We are introducing trade-goods among them — the cheapest kind of strongly woven cotton, and boots, rubbers, soap, tea, sugar. There is a great demand for these things, if they have any means to buy them. But our soviet apparatus in the localities is poor in quality and full of corruption. Even the communists here — well, I don't say all party members even in Russia are perfect, but one does n't find in Russia party

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members who own large properties and conduct private trade. Here such things occur, not only with simple communists, but with communist officials. . . . It is a backward land, and progresses slowly. We must first build up its economic life and its education."

I asked Yooldashef what places he suggested for a visit on my road to the Pamirs. What interesting social or political experiments were going on among the Kirghiz?

"You must see the 'Jalauny Soviet,'" he said, "the Soviet of the High Pastures, in the Vale of Alai. It is a nomad government, organized for the first time this year. It travels in the summer pastures with the traveling herdsmen. It is not elected by the herdsmen, since their elections take place in their more permanent winter quarters. The Soviet of the Pastures includes a court, a woman's organizer, a medical station, some schools for the liquidation of illiteracy — all the apparatus of political and social work among the nomad Kirghiz. It is appointed by the Okrug government at Osh."

The Vale of Alai, which I was to cross with the troops on my way to the Pamirs, is one hundred kilometres long by twenty or thirty wide. I asked whereabouts in this valley the Pasture Soviet was located. President Yooldashef did not know. "It wanders," he told me, "according to the location of the herders, which depends on the grass. Three days on your way you will come to Gulcha, the last permanent village. Ask there at the 'rayon' soviet;

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the Soviet of the High Pasture makes regular reports by courier to Gulcha."

That evening I spoke to Commander Lavroff of my desire to visit the Pasture Soviet in the Alai. "You will hardly have time to do so while with us," he answered. "Even if we should pass by it, we shall probably not camp near it. We choose our camping sites apart from the Kirghiz, to avoid exhausting the same grass. It would be better if you could go ahead of us to the Alai, and wait for us. We shall be delayed several days still in Osh."

Several days more in Osh! In spite of the judgment of Sultan Babur, the thought was not enticing. A single trip down the main thoroughfare seemed to have exhausted most possibilities of excitement. Yet to journey alone into the hills was clearly impossible; I am so unaccustomed a horsewoman that I cannot mount alone. I knew nothing of the language of Kirghiz, and though at the Pasture Soviet I should doubtless find persons speaking Russian, yet these were not to be expected on the journey. Could I not find some official or trading group with whom I might travel? There seemed little chance in a scant three or four days.

Yet the next noon, as I sat under the trees in the best open-air restaurant, consuming the inevitable *Borsch* followed by a Caucasian dish called *Shashlik* (pieces of lamb broiled on an iron skewer), I learned that there might be a way of preceding the troops to the Alai. I met the local correspondent of the

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Pravda Vostoka, the newspaper *Truth of the East,* which is published in Tashkent. He joyously welcomed an American colleague, and affably opened up on the subject of Osh. It was from him that I learned most of the legends quoted above, save only for that of Sultan Babur, of whose history even he was ignorant. "But don't credit me with these stories," he hastily told me. "I am a serious citizen, intent on the economics and politics of modern Osh. Don't let my boss on the *Pravda Vostoka* know I filled you full of Suleiman legends."

Appreciating my interest, he gave me a further tale, not legend but fact, though it carries the flavor of a storied past. "Somewhere behind the walls of the native city of Osh," he said, "lives the grandson of an empress! He is an aged man whose word still has authority among those Kirghiz that reverence the past. His grandmother was known as the 'Empress of Alai,' that beatiful high pasture where the Kirghiz go in summer. She was a woman of renown, and related to the great Khan Hudoyar of Kokand, a nomad Kirghiz who conquered many Uzbek cities and ruled fair Fergana till the coming of the Russians."

Thus he gave me again a sense of an Osh glamorous with history, and of potentates whose glory the outside world never knew of, but who were lords of life and death, and of large harems and many bowing tribes, in a land already hoary when Europe was young.

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I confided to my new friend my wish to visit the Pasture Soviet of the Alai. "It may be," he said, "that the Geological Expedition has not left town. They are going to Alai and beyond, on a season's prospecting for precious metals. Most of them, I know, have gone, but Professor Nikitin, their leader, was still here yesterday. He should be leaving to-day or to-morrow. To find him go down the main street to the very end, and you will see a ravine with a small house beyond to the left. If there are horses about the ravine, the Expedition is still here."

With these homely but explicit directions I hastened through the noonday heat to the end of the dusty avenue, and found Professor Nikitin, through whom, on one day's notice, I was to make my trip to the Alai.

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IV

A HORSE TRADE AND A START

THE headquarters in Osh of the Pamir Expedition of Geologists was a tiny shack, which furnished indoor sleeping place for barely four people. Its chief qualification was the large pasture around it, where a score or more horses were feeding. I knew from their presence that the last detachment of the Expedition was still in Osh, and hope sprang in me that they might let me go with them as far as the Alai.

Near a great open shed of a barn which was stacked with much dunnage, Professor Nikitin of Leningrad was engaged in showing some green helpers how to put packs on horses. He came to a pause in the work and led me inside the house to a small room which served for dining room, office, and general assembly.

"The trouble with our crowd," he remarked whimsically, "is that we have too many experts and not enough plain workmen. Too many graduates with degrees in geology and not enough who can hitch a horse. We should have left yesterday, but there are always delays at the end. We must take with us every spool of thread, every knife, every pin that we shall need till October. When you add to this the

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fact that we must take large supplies of some goods of which there is a general shortage in Russia, and must have special permits to secure them, you will see that it is not done in a hurry. However, the delay is not serious, for we hear the trails are still blocked by heavy snows beyond the Alai."

The Geological Expedition, I learned, was sent out by the Geological Committee of the Supreme Council of National Economy to investigate the deposits of precious minerals known to exist in the Pamirs. Rumors about these deposits had been numerous. The previous year, for instance, a nomad Kirghiz discovered some nuggets of gold near his encampment, and took the trouble to go all the way to Tashkent to inform the government. He had, apparently, no thought of enriching himself; but he heard such stuff was considered valuable, and some obscure impulse of loyalty, or gratitude for favors, made him think that the government should know. He bothered the offices of many bureaucrats, finding no one whose business it was to take interest; then his money and patience gave out, and he returned to Osh. Here he was discovered by my acquaintance, the press correspondent, who wrote a scathing piece about him and the reception Tashkent and Samarkand had given him.

This incident was only one of many straws pointing towards the minerals of the Pamirs. In 1928, a joint expedition of German and Russian scientists explored and charted a hitherto unknown region, and

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brought back, among other things, the clear knowledge that large quantities of gold and other rich minerals were to be found there. How much there was, how accessible, and whether commercially exploitable was still unknown. This it was the mission of the Geological Expedition to discover.

The Geological Expedition consisted of thirty persons, of whom eleven were scientists and the others helpers. Divided in three groups and scattered for a hundred kilometres across trackless peaks and glaciers, these geologists were to toil at an elevation of thirteen thousand feet and upwards till the October snows drove them down from the heights. Most of them were more accustomed to the university lecture room than to this arduous field work. Professor Nikitin himself had in his youth once camped in the Pamirs, but he admitted that his present age made the task for him an exhausting one.

Among the geologists was one woman, a handsome girl in her twenties, plentifully supplied with rouge and lip stick. She was not, as I at first supposed, the wife of one of the leaders; no wives are taken at state expense on Russian expeditions. She was a geologist herself, not long since graduated from the Leningrad University. She would be put in charge of a gold claim a full day's journey away from her nearest colleague, assisted by two men laborers. She carried a small revolver and expressed surprise that I should venture so far into the wilds without one.

I told Professor Nikitin my desire to visit the

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Pasture Soviet in the Vale of Alai, and asked how far his proposed route coincided with my plans. Could I perhaps go with him for part of the distance, and find then some way of stopping over in the Alai Valley to await the troops? He replied that he expected to leave Osh on June 23, two days before the troops, and that he hoped to travel faster than they would, since his party was smaller.

"We shall go by the same route as they for nearly a week, till we come to the Toldik Pass, from which two trails branch down to the Vale of Alai. At this point they go to the left and we to the right, entering the valley some thirty or forty kilometres apart. I suggest you go with us as far as the Vale of Alai and then hire a Kirghiz guide to take you to the Pasture Soviet. By that time we shall know where it is. At the Pasture Soviet there will be Kirghiz speaking Russian, and they will give you a guide to help you meet the troops."

The plan thus sketched seemed a bit hazardous, with many loopholes. Somewhere out in the wilds of the Vale of Alai I was to find a Kirghiz guide with whom I could not exchange a syllable, and he was to deliver me to troops on the march. If he failed to do this, who would ever know of it? Commander Lavroff would conclude that I was still with Nikitin, while Professor Nikitin would have sent me to join the army. If any faint apprehensions arose at the uncertainties involved in such planning, they were set at rest by the easy attitude of Commander Lavroff.

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"For your purposes it is a good plan," he said, "for with us you would see little of Kirghiz life. If you are going to change groups, you must have your own horse, for the horses in each caravan are in charge of caravan men who would not rent them out except under their own supervision. While you are with us, you can get food from us, at the rates offered to officers' families; no doubt the Geological Expedition will make the same arrangement. But if you are to be in the Alai alone, you must take some food; you will find little there but lambs and milk.

"To meet us you need only to remember two names: Sary-tash and Bordoba. These are not permanent settlements, but the names of camping sites, around which will doubtless be grouped many Kirghiz yurts. Even if one of these sites should be vacant, every Kirghiz knows where it is. I shall pass through Sary-tash on July 3, and Bordoba, which is across the valley, on July 4. Join us at whichever of these places is nearest for you. Probably the Pasture Soviet is not far from one of them."

The first step towards my journey was clearly to buy a horse. On this all agreed, though the geologists and the army men had different opinions about the price I must give. Commander Lavroff assured me that decent horses were not to be had under three hundred rubles; he himself had recently bought an excellent steed in Fergana for seven hundred. Professor Nikitin reassured me. "You are not joining the cavalry," he said, smiling. "We bought our

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mountain nags for one hundred and fifty rubles in Northern Kirghizia. I will send our workman Artumov with you to the market."

I must at once admit that I know nothing of horses. Save for short trips in my childhood on ponies in the Zoölogical Gardens, one of which once threw me over a hedge, I had never ridden horseback till the previous summer in the Caucasus. On that occasion, crossing the main ridge through the wilds of Chechnia and Daghestan, I had traveled several hundred miles on seven different nags and saddles, averaging two days on each. On the last three days, our native guides compelled us to use pack saddles, on which they intended to carry freight on the return journey. These wooden frames, padded with my bedding, I admit that I found little worse than other saddles — a confession which completes the display of my ignorance to any experienced horseman.

The weekly horse market of Osh came on the morning of the twenty-second. When I reached the geologist's camp, the two workmen had already gone to the market, and I was told to go after them and find them. It was some distance away in the native city. A drive by cab brought me in twenty minutes to a level ground by the river, whence arose great dust and a din of much stamping and chatter. I pressed through a gate in an improvised barrier kept by a guard, and found myself in the horse market of Osh.

Irregularly in every direction horses were tethered

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—to trees, to stumps, to the ends of wagons. A central space had been partially cleared, and here a dozen beasts were tramping about, being tried out by prospective owners. There was no barrier between the crowds and the cleared space; horses pushed into the crowd, and the crowd pushed between the horses. To proceed even a few feet forward it was necessary to shove through jostling Kirghiz and dive under the heads of horses. More than half an hour I sought in this mêlée, but found no trace of the Geological Expedition.

Suddenly I spied two Russians, on whose faces was the stamp of the city-bred educated man turned explorer, never to be mistaken for the peasant. "Your friends left here an hour ago," they told me. "We met them; we also are buying horses for an expedition to the Kirghiz winter quarters and summer pastures, studying the economic organization of their life. We are from the newly organized Economic Institute attached to the University of Central Asia, which studies especially the economy of native peoples. We have found few good horses here, and those are very expensive. We shall seek further at the Uzgen horse market day after to-morrow."

The Uzgen horse market was clearly too late for me. Then a dark-skinned man in the crowd volunteered the information that he came from Horog, where horses were much better than in Osh and a hundred rubles cheaper. Badakhshan horses, he said, are famous through all the hills, but the horse

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trade in Osh is spoiled by the many caravan men. Since Horog lay nearly a month away at the end of the Pamir trail, his information, while interesting, was not useful. Still another man told me that in Northern Kirghizia, near Frunze, horses were to be had at very good prices. But Frunze was three weeks' journey in another direction. I felt that I was acquiring news of the horse trade of Asia, but was hardly buying a horse.

By the time I had located my cab driver, who was also inspecting horses, and returned to Nikitin, the morning was far advanced. It seemed doubtful whether the horse market would keep open long enough for us to revisit it. But Artumov agreed to take the chance with me. We were further delayed by a stop at the post office to draw some money, for Artumov told me I must take at least three hundred rubles. I had with me, all told, one thousand rubles in the convenient Russian letter of credit, cashable at any post office or bank or railway station.

"You weigh how much?" asked Artumov bluntly. "One hundred and eighty pounds? And you intend to take no pack horse, but to put your personal baggage also on your riding horse. Say sixty to seventy pounds more — two hundred and fifty in all. This weight the horse must carry day after day over high passes where the air is thin and the grass scanty. Clearly you need a horse of the hills who can work on a grass diet; but clearly, also, he must be a strong

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beast. Those little creatures that sell for less than two hundred would drop under you before you crossed the Pamirs."

Artumov clearly knew his business, which was to carry two hundred and fifty pounds of weight securely over the Pamirs. I would trust his judgment, making only one reservation: I would try the horse myself to test his gait. This, after all, was the only point of a horse which I could judge. Artumov warned me that the hour was late, and the market would be thinning. We should have to take, and quickly, the best of what we found.

To my inexperienced eyes there still seemed an endless number of horses, but Artumov pointed out that most were not for sale, or were impossible for my purpose. "Here is one that might do," he said at last, approaching a placid-looking beast of mixed brown shades. He leaped into the saddle and rode back and forth in the cleared space. "Easy gait," he said. "Suppose you try him."

Of all the seven horses I had ridden in the Caucasus, only one seemed in recollection to have had a gait as easy as this one. Surely on such a horse I should not be unduly tired. The owner wanted three hundred and fifty rubles, so we looked elsewhere, coming back each time to the first one. A Russian peasant speaking Kirghiz thrust himself into the discussion, volunteering to interpret for us. He praised our choice of a horse so fervently that I suspected him to be in league with the owner, till I saw

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that he praised just as fervently each horse towards which we turned.

We decided to begin bargaining. The owner assured us that the horse was well worth three hundred and fifty or even four hundred rubles, but since the market was nearly over, we might have it for three hundred. Only three hundred; it was a sin not to grab him at once for such a price. He was insulting a noble beast to suggest it. The horse was young; he pulled open the mouth and bade us note six years of age. Artumov nodded; but the horse's mouth meant nothing at all to me. The horse was Kashgar-bred and mountain-trained, he said, strong and sure-footed. When I asked about his trot, which I had been unable to test in so small a space, the owner replied a bit scornfully that Kashgar horses never trotted; they took the "wide stride," which was nearly as fast as a trot and capable of being kept up indefinitely. I was in optimistic mood, and "wide stride" sounded much less painful than my memories of Caucasian trotters.

We offered two hundred rubles; the owner protested at our crime. To insult such a horse with two hundred was clearly impossible. Artumov informed him that we were not millionaires and must still buy a saddle. Would he leave an American woman, the guest of his nation, to go without a saddle to the Pamirs because she paid so much for a horse? The owner assured us that on such a horse the saddle was of little moment. A saddle like that on him now

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could be bought, with all its gear, for a mere twenty rubles. I suggested that he sell it for that price, but Artumov refused to translate this. The Mohammedans of this region, he said, never sell a horse and saddle together. Naked the horse was born and naked he must go to his new master. Even the lead rope by which he is taken away must be new.

By degrees his price came down and ours went up till we met at two hundred and fifty rubles. "I think it is his last word," said Artumov. "Better take it." Our volunteer peasant interpreter was loud in his assertions that nowhere could we get such a horse for two hundred and fifty. We agreed to buy; and thereupon found there was still to pay a seven and a half ruble registry fee to the horse market, which should have been included in our bargaining but for our ignorance. The former owner agreed to pay two and a half rubles towards it, leaving me to pay five. A formal paper was given me from the market, stamped and sealed, declaring me the owner.

All that I knew of my acquisition was that his gait was easy; this, in fact, was all I was capable of knowing. I had Artumov's assurance that he was young and strong, which seemed the chief requisite for a Pamir trip. I was to learn later that he was sure-footed in dangerous places, but stumbled frequently on easy roads. If I had noticed that my six-year-old was a stallion, and not a mare or a gelding, the fact at the time would have meant to me nothing. I was later to learn the capricious temper that char-

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acterized my new possession, and won him in every caravan the reputation of being "a good animal but a bad character." He had seemed to me even a trifle slow and lazy; he was, till it suited him to be otherwise.

Our self-appointed interpreter refused to leave us; he seemed tireless in his devotion to our interests. He insisted on showing us the saddle shops, but the saddles were all expensive. They were Uzbek models, built of wood, with a small saucer-like seat, and painted in gaudy designs predominantly red in color; fifty rubles and more was asked for them with their various trappings. Artumov thought that Nikitin had a secondhand saddle he might sell me. We decided to end our shopping, and, by way of dismissing our officious interpreter, we stopped at a chaikhana and offered him some tea. We were, however, not to get rid of him so easily. It now appeared he was a professional go-between in the market. Praising horses was the way he made his living; he cared not which horse, as long as the sale was made. Two rubles it took to content him; I had no way of knowing what he may have received from the seller.

We returned to Nikitin and readily secured the secondhand saddle for twenty rubles—an Uzbek saucer-shaped saddle. "The exact shape matters little," said all these travelers. "The saddle is only a base on which to pile saddlebags and bedding. It is the latter you must arrange for comfort." Nikitin bade me pack and be ready by noon to-morrow.

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As an afterthought he asked if I had yet secured my G.P.U. permit to enter the Pamirs. I told him I had a visa from Moscow, and he looked concerned. "It is not enough," he said. "You must go in the morning to the G.P.U. and get a paper, showing that you are registered as entering at Osh and giving your expected route. No doubt you will get it at once when you show the Foreign Office permit."

Commander Lavroff seemed to take the permit less seriously. "If you were traveling with us, you would not need it," he said, "but since you will be wandering about on your own in all directions, you should have it." In some concern I presented myself next morning at the G.P.U. as soon as its office opened and found that Nikitin's warning had been justified. "Certainly you need a permit," said the official in charge of the outer office. "Otherwise you would be sent back from Sufi-Kurgan, four or five journeys out. How long have you been in Osh? Three days? And in what hotel have you been living, since you are not yet registered with us?"

His tones augured ill for the hotel that had carelessly failed to register me. I hastened to explain that as I had come with Comrade Lavroff's party, I had been sleeping in the corridor of the army hospital, not even knowing that hotels in Osh existed. "Lavroff — a new man!" he exclaimed with a touch of impatience. He then examined my passport in some detail.

"How is this? No date is given for your trip to

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the Pamirs! No date of entry, no time limit for the journey! Did you show this passport and visa to the Foreign Office representative in either Tashkent or Andizhan?"

With a sinking heart I explained that while I had taken tea in Tashkent with Vinogradova, the acting head of the Foreign Office, it had not occurred to me to show her my visa, nor to ask her to correct improper dating by her superiors in Moscow. As for Andizhan, I had spent only two hours in that city waiting on a corner with Lavroff's party while the commander found an autobus for our evening trip to Osh.

"Very well," he said resignedly. "We 'll just send a telegram to Tashkent about you, and perhaps get an answer by to-morrow."

"But I am to leave at noon to-day," I cried, "with the Geological Expedition. Otherwise I shall have no time to see the Pasture Soviet in the Alai."

"Then why did you not come to us before?" he demanded. "Why did you wait till the very last morning? You have been three days in Osh." I explained that Moscow, in giving me my visa, had not informed me that I must show it at every place en route, and I had not even known his office existed till Professor Nikitin had said I needed a permit.

"Nikitin," he said, somewhat appeased. "Well, at last someone gave you correct advice." He took my passport and went to an inner office, but returned, shaking his head. "There 's no one there," he

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remarked, and my hopes fell as I realized that he had failed to find the higher official whose confirmation he desired. Alone, he clearly hesitated to make a decision. He turned to a man who had been talking with him when I entered. "What do you think, Comrade Vaviloff?" he asked. "Shall I give the citizeness this permit?"

The man thus addressed had attracted my attention when I first entered by his poised, intelligent look, full of kindly humor. There was that about him which makes one say at once, "A man of importance, whose decisions count in the world." Then my thoughts had shifted from him in the debate about my permit, and I had but vaguely noticed that he was regarding my perplexities with an amused considerateness. I was later to learn that he was a famous scientist, chief of the Institute of Applied Botany under the Academy of Science in Leningrad, traveling through all the world to study problems of plant life and to import plants needed for crossbreeding to Russia.

Now I knew him only as my rescuer. "I think you might," he said pleasantly to the official, "if it is only the date of entry that Moscow omitted."

Thus strengthened, the official signed and gave me a paper reading: "Permit for Citizeness Anna Louise Strong to enter the forbidden frontier zone and to travel in it on the route Osh–Alai–Horog and return, till August 27, 1929." As I read this detailed limitation of my journey, I realized how very far

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beyond the usual routes I was venturing, beyond even the half-forbidden Turkestan into which foreigners penetrate with difficulty. I was to enter the "forbidden frontier zone" for which even Nikitin and Vaviloff needed permits. No wonder the G.P.U. official had thought me unduly casual.

There remained an hour before noon in which to pack my baggage. There was not much of it, but the placing of every object must be carefully considered. I had not only to pack it so that I might carry it all on the horse whereon I rode, but also so that the perishable things, like kodak films, should be guarded against the vicissitudes of the journey, against horse's sweat, and rain, and the plashing of water from forded rivers.

I had bought the day before in the market, for four rubles, a pair of saddlebags of native make, as large as I could find and of firmly woven cotton cords. These were in no way waterproof and could not be counted on as protection, but merely as containers. At the bottom of one bag, and spreading upwards towards the side from which the horse's heat might be expected, I placed a single folded bed sheet. For most of my journey I knew it would be useless, but I hoped to find at last in some far valley a place where it might add comfort to some regular bed. It could then be washed and put to use; meantime it added protection to my belongings.

Next the sheet, at the very bottom, went a small tight roll of summer clothing, also for the far, hot

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valleys; three thin dresses, which altogether took less room than a single thick towel, a rayon chemise, two pairs of silk stockings. Somewhere I might emerge at last in civilization, and these things were for that a shabby preparation. At the bottom of this saddlebag went also reserves: an extra cake of laundry soap, some extra vaseline, and grease paint against high altitudes. Only those things which I would not need for some time went at the bottom of this saddlebag.

Above them I fitted, by strenuous squeezing, my small black seal traveling bag. Given to me twenty years before by an uncle as a graduation present, it had traveled with me enduringly through many parts of the world. This was to be, alas, its final journey; certainly even its sturdy pre-war seal would not survive the Pamirs. But the cause in which it must be sacrificed was worthy. It was my only waterproof container. Into its small space, sixteen by seven inches at the bottom and curving together at the top, I packed four dozen rolls of films, one small extra kodak, toilet articles, my smoked glasses, notebooks, and pencils. Sometimes I found room in it for my flash light or thin sweater.

Into the other saddlebag went my small German rucksack — which, if not quite waterproof, was at least water-resistant — containing one woolen blouse, one cotton blouse, six batteries for my flash light wrapped in handkerchiefs and wool socks, and two changes of underwear. These were combination suits

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of thinnest rayon, and though most explorers will look with scorn at my choice of clothing, the rayon was recommended to me by the fact that it took up practically no space. It also gave no warmth, but this was not needed when the sun shone, and for darkness I could add outer clothing.

For such extra warmth I had a thin sweater, a pair of wool breeches, and an ancient wool skirt, of pre-war "forestry cloth" such as we use in Seattle for mountain camps. These went next the rucksack wrapped around my second pair of shoes. Here also went a small black bag containing such things as I might need for the night — a knit cap, fur socks, a nightgown and thin kimona, and a towel. Certainly these things would not be always needed, and never all at the same time. They represented two extremes of nighttime preparations: for frosty nights when one adds additional clothing, and for infrequent hoped-for nights in some post where there might be a chance to undress.

Into this second saddlebag went also such food supplies as I carried, and if the list of clothing leaves little space for provisions, I admit that I had but few and these were crowded. As the trip advanced, the bag was sometimes stretched to contain an army can of beef and a few *lepeshka,* the hard, round biscuit loaves of Central Asia. But in leaving Osh, assured of meals with the geologists and milk in the Alai and army rations thereafter, I supplemented these hopes only with a water canteen, half a pound each of sugar

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and dried apricots, and somewhat less than a quarter pound each of coffee, tea, and cocoa. The really reckless addition to my food supply was two pounds of hard candies, bought in Tashkent.

Hard candies for a trip into the Pamirs! Surely these seem luxuries taken at the expense of comforts! But I have long found that, in climbing mountains, the only thing I can eat at high altitudes is something light and acid. These candies would keep my mouth from drying into a rough, furry condition on exhausting days in the heights, when water is forbidden. In the lower levels where people live I expected to eat as did the natives. Surely I need not starve where Kirghiz have meat and milk. In the higher altitudes, where neither people nor food are found, I relied on my candies and apricots for their sugar and acid. And when I again should come to yurts and milk, what more refreshing than a large mug of cocoa? The mug, be it mentioned, was an enamel cup that hung at my belt. The necessary knife, fork, and spoon were at hand in my black traveling bag. I left Osh with the extra luxury of an enamel plate, but in the first week I lost it.

I had planned better than I knew with my candies. In every Kirghiz yurt they assured me a hospitable welcome. These nomads, living chiefly on milk products, have few of the foods of modern civilization. They crave especially sugar. One small hard candy apiece given to the children of a yurt always brought smiles and a return offering of milk or kou-

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miss. If I had carried laundry soap in addition to candies I might have traded with them indefinitely, but of soap I had barely enough for my own needs.

Thus lightly armed I prepared to set forth from Osh into the Pamirs. I had not even a coat; my jacket of forestry cloth had been stolen in the Caucasus, and ordinary coats are a burden to touch in the heat of Central Asia. At the last moment in leaving Moscow, I had taken a Mexican serape, which had hitherto served me only as a sofa ornament. Would it not serve me now, as it had its Indian owner, for blanket and coat alike in the high plateaus? In addition to this was a sleeping bag, made of a comforter of camels' wool bought in Urga, and covered with airplane linen left from Quaker supplies in the days of the Russian famine. It was warm, but in no sense waterproof. Somewhere in the Pamirs I knew I should need warmer covering — sheepskin or fur. But where the Kirghiz went, surely I could secure from them the same covering they use.

In saddling my horse the sleeping bag and serape were left till the last, and were folded across the saddle, giving me a high, soft perch in air. Since the sleeping bag was not waterproof, it was an additional advantage to have it under me, where my body would protect it from occasional showers. With the close-woven serape thrown over my head and spread wide around my knees and baggage, I counted on having at least some dry clothing after any rain. I never weighed my baggage, for no scales were available,

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but it was probably between fifty and seventy pounds. I could lift it from the horse myself and drag it a short distance unaided without dropping it unduly on a ground that might be muddy or flinty. I could thus be relatively independent of aid in the groups which might accept me as traveling companion.

Promptly at noon I reached Nikitin's camp at the town's edge. The first two groups of geologists had set off many days before, followed a few days later by the heavy baggage on camels. There was left a small caravan of nine persons and twenty horses. They were delaying into the afternoon for two last purchases. Due to the flour shortage in the Soviet Union, special permits were always needed to buy a large advance supply; the presentation of these permits at the tiny Osh coöperative had caused a flurried delay. There were lacking also the grass cutters, which the Expedition would use to cut grass in the Vale of Alai for packing into their higher grassless camps among the rocks and snows.

Meantime a farewell dinner had been prepared by the housewife, to whom farewells to expeditions were no novelty, and who wished to honor our departure. It began with chicken soup prepared in Russian style with a whole fowl cut up in it, more like a thin chicken stew with rice than what the Western world calls soup. There followed a lavish lamb stew with lots of potatoes. I protested that the chicken had been enough, and that such a heavy meal was poor preparation for a hard ride.

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"Eat," they cried to me, "eat. It is the last civilized food you will see for months."

The lamb was followed by heaping bowls of fruit compote. Two kinds of wine in many bottles added to the festivity, and a sweet-tasting fruit cordial which I was told was non-intoxicating, only to learn later, amid laughter, that it was as strong as vodka, under its soft disguise of fruit. The flour arrived, and then the workmen who brought it had to dine also, and made no speed in their eating. By the time the horses were half packed it was five o'clock. Storm clouds were gathering, rain seemed imminent. Most of the party began to protest that they should wait till the morrow; was it worth getting wet in order to camp ten miles or so down the road?

This time the genial Professor Nikitin proved obdurate. "It is worth even a wetting," he said, "to try our packs once, and to get out of Osh."

We therefore left Osh at 6.40 in the evening, a most belated hour for beginning an expedition. Behind Suleiman's Throne an angry orange glow spread up the sky, where the storm made sunset before the appointed hour. Steadily our road mounted and snow peaks came into view, only to be lost again as we dipped behind nearer hills.

It was a wide, rough road, beaten by many centuries of caravans. In no way was it steep or difficult. Yet our pack animals fell often, either from bad loading or because they were poor horses. We had not yet learned to adjust the heavier loads to the

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stronger beasts, or even to tie the loads properly. Nikitin's irony of "too many expert geologists and not enough who can hitch a horse" was clearly true; and the need of a first short evening to "try our packs" was evident.

My horse kept easily along near the head of the procession. I decided to name him, and wavered between "Pamir" and "Alai," each of which seemed appropriate. But since the Pamirs are the graveyard of horses, while the Alai is the paradise of all live stock, I gave him, in gratitude for his first evening's performance, the pleasanter name. The rest of the party had already dubbed him "Americanka," or "American Girl," which hardly fitted his sex.

All congratulated me on "Alai," and I began to preen myself as a lucky horse trader. He loped along far more easily than any horse I had tried in the Caucasus. But even on this first evening came one warning of the future. During a long wait while the pack animals were readjusted, I had dismounted and chose to walk ahead of our caravan, leading my horse. It was already dusk; the road was but dimly visible. Suddenly Alai took fright at something he chose to see in the shadows, — some white stone perhaps, to judge from his later obsessions, — and with a swift, vicious jerk he tore himself from my hold so violently that I cried out involuntarily. He raced back towards the caravan, the members of which excitedly came to ask if I had been thrown. Shame-

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facedly I confessed that I had let him pull loose while carelessly strolling along.

"The lead horse is apt to shy in the dark," said Professor Nikitin. "Better stay back with us." I soon forgot the incident, which was, if I had known it, my warning that Alai had a habit of shying at almost anything, and of running away suddenly and violently from his fancied fears.

Our intended halting place was Madé, only fourteen kilometres from Osh, but due to various troubles with the pack animals, we reached it at half-past ten in the evening. Already the night was black, and the moon had not yet risen. The muddy lane of the village was lit only here and there by the gleam of a candle, or the glow of a fire and of pipes at some late chai-khanas. We stopped at the first of these, and Artumov, who knew a few words of Kirghiz, shouted a question, in which I made out the word "caravanserai." The answer was negative; I saw that we were directed further.

So we went through the dark, shouting for a "caravanserai." At the frequent repetitions I realized at last the totally unpoetic meaning of that word, behind the glamor with which the West has invested it. It carries indeed the flavor of far journeys, but in their most unromantic aspect. "Caravanserai," a "barn for a caravan"—this was what we wanted. No sleeping comforts for human beings were in our demand; men might sleep anywhere.

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We needed a place that could stable a caravan, and give fodder and drink and care to its horses. Our halting places were to be conditioned, not by gorgeous views, nor by our own utter weariness, nor by clear water and comfortable beds, but simply by pasture. Thus have the caravans of the East traveled for ages.

We found at last our caravanserai, which for this night was only a fenced pasture, with a promise of hay. At one end, under a gorgeous spreading tree, we unloaded our baggage and lay down to rest. Two of the younger men went to a chai-khana to order tea and plov, while Professor Nikitin busied himself with the more necessary task of securing hay. This meant waking a peasant and stimulating him to work in the middle of the night.

I curled in my sleeping bag for a preliminary nap, but was aroused by the shouts of the party telling that tea had come, though the innkeeper refused to make plov so late. It was close on midnight and a golden moon had risen. Going to the pile of baggage where teakettles were placed, I found that Professor Nikitin had dropped in a sleep of exhaustion while waiting for tea, without even a blanket against the chill of a mountain night. I suddenly realized what must be the weariness of this uncomplaining man, on whom we had for days piled all our problems and our inefficiencies, and who, no longer young, and softened by city life, had made up by his own labors for all our physical and mental lacks.

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The pouring of tea woke him, and he rose and drank. Then we all turned to our sleeping bags for a four-hour rest till dawn at our first camp site in Madé.

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V

THE RAINS OF GULCHA

THE hills through which we were to pass on our first three days from Osh to Gulcha are famed for unsettled weather and that gentle beauty made green by frequent rains. It is here that waves of heat rising from the cotton fields of the Fergana Valley clash with icy blasts from the Roof of the World. Here by the foaming streams are villages of settled Kirghiz, and the clay-built *zimovka,* or winter quarters, of the nomads.

I woke at dawn in our first camp at Madé, stiff from my first night on the ground. No one seemed to be moving. I wandered along a little stream, took a brief icy bath, and returned refreshed, but the camp was still sleeping. Only Professor Nikitin was moving about, planning the redistribution of packs on the animals. I saw a chance to pull ahead by walking, and I always prefer my own feet to the best of horses, so I told Professor Nikitin he might use my animal to help with the loads, while I strolled on till they overtook me. He said they would make the noonday rest at a place called Langar, some twenty kilometres ahead, and that I should wait there if not by that time overtaken.

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It was shortly after five o'clock when I started along the road, afoot and alone in Kirghizia. It was a land of red poppies, purple lupine, and boiling brown streams. Soon the sun arose and diffused a heat that at first was pleasant. With the sun I began to meet other travelers.

First an occasional Kirghiz, always on horseback, staring at me with an intensity that was slightly disquieting. Had they objections, I wondered, to strangers thus crossing their land? Soon I learned the reason for their interest, for they began to make signs to me, and presently a Kirghiz who spoke Russian interpreted all these signs by two questions: "Where is your horse? Have you lost it?" I replied that it was coming behind with the caravan, but this puzzled him. Had n't our caravan enough horses, he asked pityingly. When I assured him that I preferred walking in the cool of the morning, he shook his head at my insanity. Thereafter I understood the other Kirghiz who stared at me, and pointed to their horses and asked a question. They all wanted to know where my horse was. Possibly they would even have helped me chase it, if I had asked them. But they could not understand a traveler walking. Even the poorest of the nomads had a horse; it was the first requisite of existence.

Soon I began to meet, not single travelers, but whole caravans of camels, some twenty to a driver, and all unloaded. I wondered at first why they carried no packs, and then understood that they had

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spent the night by the road for the sake of free pasture and were going to Osh for their loads. From time to time the road rose to a summit, giving a view of snow ranges over rounded hills. Always at such times there were camels in the foreground, rising from pasture or pacing the road slowly towards me.

After an hour and a half I met an aged Uzbek who also expressed himself in Russian at the sight of my horseless condition. I was ready for a rest and, as he seemed inclined to be garrulous, I sat on a rock and returned his questions. He told me that he was patrolling the road repairs for a distance of several kilometres; he informed me that I had come exactly six kilometres from Madé, which seemed very little. He uttered a jumble of sounds which, by the aid of some signs and the pride with which he said them, I made out to be a corruption of "automobile." When I pronounced the word myself, he nodded emphatically, and assured me the road was going to be made for automobiles as far as Gulcha; the Five-Year Plan, he heard, would even take it to Irkestan on the borders of China.

It seemed amazing to hear of the Five-Year Plan from this aged Uzbek road patrol in the wilds of Kirghizia. He grew reminiscent about the changes in the region. "If you came this far alone from Madé a few years ago," he said, "you would n't get here. They would shoot you before you got this far. Only bandits were here then. They stole horses and cattle and killed you if you objected. They

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stole also girls, and strong young fellows to help them. You just could n't live at all in those days. Now government has come and it is quiet."

Leaving the Uzbek, I resolved to make better time, hoping to reach Langar ahead of the horses. But by half-past eight it was very hot; the road was full of pebbles which hurt my feet. By half-past nine the road was populous with caravans, all of them looking at me pityingly and asking if my horse was lost. Their pity no longer seemed to me superfluous, for the road was a very inferno of heat. My pace declined to about two kilometres an hour, and even less when I came to a place where the road was being mended, and where I walked an hour on crumbling heaps of blistering stones.

It was not merely pride that kept me going, but the fact that there was no shade anywhere, and resting seemed only a trifle better than walking. At last a swarthy Uzbek overtook me, expressed again the universal pity for a horseless traveler, and offered me a seat on the horse behind him. He had neither saddle nor stirrups, but rode atop a mighty heap of baggage, and since there were no rocks near to serve as mounting block, I did not see how I could possibly climb up. So I declined, but somewhat half-heartedly. Seeing this, he dismounted, and indicated that he would push me up on the horse.

The process was most undignified. The horse was high, and the baggage heap was higher — a shifting heap, largely unfastened, intended to be held in place

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by the weight of the rider. There was not the slightest foothold, and only insecure handholds. But the Uzbek was patient and apparently without a sense of humor. Quite soberly he got me up, with head dangling on one side and feet on the other, and then, with his aid, I secured a seat. But there was clearly no room for him also, so he resigned himself to the penalties of courtesy, and led me on the horse for about two kilometres. Then he made signs for me to dismount, pointed down the road to a tent flap which he said was Langar, and turned aside himself by a different path across a stream.

Ten minutes later I had reached the noonday halt designated by Nikitin, and found it consisted of one mud hut which served tea to travelers, and one tent, belonging to the road-repair gang. I stumbled into the hut, which was dark and dirty, but gratefully cool after the blistering sun. I ordered tea, which proved to be a poor-tasting discolored water, but I drank it copiously to assuage my thirst. I even reposed, spreading my handkerchief under my head on the very doubtful-looking floor covering which made a lounging place of the raised part of the mud floor. Yet I had come only twenty kilometres — twelve miles — in nearly seven hours.

A Kirghiz in the uniform of the G.P.U. came into the hut and showed much interest in me, especially when he saw me consulting a map, issued by army headquarters in Tashkent. I assumed that his interest was professional, and produced my permit.

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But he waved it aside; his desire was more naïve — he wanted to look at my map and find Langar on it. Not for very long had he learned to read; the army had taught him; to find himself on a map had a thrill of novelty. Why should I deny him; for I myself was always finding pleasure in the same simple research. He told me that many Kirghiz now enter the army, preferring the cavalry where they are good riders. He himself was home on leave from his station at Termes.

The caravan arrived at one o'clock. They had delayed in Madé to reorganize the loading of the baggage, and had sent part of it ahead by arba, the springless wheeled cart of these regions, to Gulcha, which marked the end of the wheeled traffic. Now they were traveling light and fast. They unpacked the horses, bought clover, and borrowed the tent of the road gang to set out a meal. Canned fish, canned stuffed peppers, and tea made with boiling water from the hut — these were only the accessories of our repast; its staple was plentiful bread and butter. We were still a short enough time from Osh to have good Russian bread, and butter which the sun had softened but not spoiled. These luxuries would not last very long on our trip.

Already the changeful weather of Gulcha hills had covered the sun with clouds, which spilled occasional rain. The keeper of the chai-khana told us that no shelter was to be expected ahead. Yet we left at four o'clock in a rain which turned rapidly to a down-

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pour. I now had the chance to test my serape as a raincoat. Putting it over my head, and fastening its sides with safety pins, I made of myself a tent over the baggage on which I sat. At first the serape shed water, but when the heaviest of the cloud-bursts came, it was soaked through. However, none of the party's raincoats had given better protection; Professor Nikitin's oilskins were the only effective shelter in such a rain.

Perhaps my years in Seattle have fixed my choice of climate; I felt much happier wet and cold than when wilted by heat in the morning. Under the mists of rain the hills were beautiful. Below us ran the river Toldik, yellow waters flecked with white foam. The sweeping hills rose steadily higher and higher; their slopes were a brilliant green. Everywhere was knee-deep pasture. Anywhere we might stop and find fodder for horses; we need only discover some shelter for ourselves in which to get dry.

We met a group of soldiers returning from the Pamirs. They had come, not by Gulcha, but by a shorter, rougher way. So we were the first white persons they had seen for days, and they hailed us joyfully. They warned us against the Pamirs; all the passes were deep in snow and nowhere was there fodder. Nikitin paid scant heed to their warning; snow at this season changes much in a week, and, if necessary, a halt in the Vale of Alai would be advantageous for our horses.

The soldiers, like the keeper of the chai-khana,

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reported no shelter ahead. It was growing dusk; our chances for the night seemed damp. Nikitin firmly declared, however, that almost anywhere now in the hills we might come upon a zimovka, the winter quarters of Kirghiz now abandoned for their summer pastures. And suddenly, rounding a bend, we saw one: a cluster of mud huts and stables on the green slopes above us, apparently deserted save for one chimney through which rose a thin smoke. We turned our horses through pasture that rose to the stirrups, and, carefully picking our way to avoid holes, came to the single occupied dwelling. Under a rough shed we found the arba with our baggage; its driver, like us, had taken shelter here. He was the solitary occupant. Our party was alone in a deserted village.

The Kirghiz driver, preceding us, had already prospected the village, and he indicated a hut which he said would do admirably for our camp. Here was a large room, with a thin grass matting on the earth floor, and with a tiny unglassed window high in the end wall, letting in little light but plenty of air. Outside was an equally large portico, flush with the hillside, but walled on three sides and roofed. At the outer edge of this, he said, we should build our fire for warmth and supper, while all about our baggage could be sheltered.

We led the horses into the portico for unloading, and turned them out on the hill with feet well hobbled. The driver of the arba brought armfuls of dry

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branches. We made a fire, boiled tea, and partly dried our clothing. There was still plenty of bread and butter, and this, with sardines and bacon, made a feast. I observed that the bacon was cut into small cubes and eaten raw; no one in our party seemed to have heard of broiling it. I resolved to unearth a frying pan before the bacon supply was gone, and try the effect of cookery on our group. So far, we had heated nothing but tea.

For several hundred feet above our camp stretched a ragged growth of wheat, rank with weeds and seeming never to have been ploughed, but rather scattered unevenly over barely scratched earth. It was therefore necessary, said Nikitin, to set a watch on our horses all the night, lest they should pasture on the grain of our involuntary host. Live stock was clearly our host's main business. He had left his wheat for the summer to the mercy of passing horses, trusting to luck that there would be some left for his own live stock's wintering, and perhaps even for a little bread for himself. But bread is still a luxury with the nomads; if the grain crop fails, they survive on meat, as did their fathers.

Artumov told at the camp fire with gusto how once the horses of his caravan got away in the night and destroyed a whole desiatin of young grain. And he got the Kirghiz owner, who was illiterate, to sign a paper saying that the grain had been eaten by horses of an unknown caravan. Clearly Artumov was unknown to the Kirghiz; and the simple fellow believed

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PROFESSOR NIKITIN AND THE PARTY SETTLING INTO THE KIRGHIZ "ZIMOVKA"

SOVIET HEADQUARTERS IN A KIRGHIZ VILLAGE
(Note the Posters on the side of the Yurt)

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himself to be signing a paper which would get him recompense from government headquarters. The words "unknown owner" of course had settled his case; he could not show who had eaten the grass, and would get nothing.

"You did very wrong," said Nikitin gravely. "You did wrong to more than one Kirghiz. You injured perhaps the faith of a whole village in Russian travelers and in our government." I pictured the simple mountaineer, illiterate, going from office to office in the town of Osh, standing in one line after another, always shoved on by clerks who would be too bored to explain to him, until he at last lost patience and went home to his hills. How much good propaganda about "getting together" of races would be undone by that one shrewd piece of trickery!

No one knew exactly how far it was yet to Gulcha, but all seemed agreed that it was much less than a full day's journey. So when the morning dawned in a gray drizzle, we rose late, and spent much time making tea. The water had to be brought half a kilometre from the river. Based on the previous day's experience, a shifting of packs again took place, which was time-consuming. So it was well after ten o'clock when at last we started, in intermittent showers not heavy enough to be very wetting. In less than two hours we came to the foot of the pass which led to Gulcha, and felt that we could not be far from the journey's end.

Here we came upon a caravan of camels camped

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by the road, huddled and shivering as the pitiless rain beat on their flanks. Their packs had been piled together and covered by an arching canvas which did duty also as tent for the drivers. A man came running, calling to Nikitin, who recognized his own camel train which had set out a week before from Osh for the Alai. Four days, the driver explained, they had camped at the foot of this pass, waiting; the camels could not walk uphill in the slippery mud. Under the cold rain which had beat four days upon them, the beasts were exhausted; one had given out completely and could not carry a pack even if the weather should clear.

We halted for discussion; could our horses help the situation? No, said the driver; even if we carried his baggage for him to Gulcha, it was doubtful if the camels could get through the pass till the mud was dried. The descent beyond was reported full of heavy clay in which these "ships of the desert" were utterly helpless. As we stood considering possible means of assistance, a caravan of little burros trotted past us in the rain, each under a burden that seemed bigger than he was, sure-footed, slow, but persistent, making as good time in a long day as had our horses. Nikitin looked at them with bitter envy. "I recommended burros," he said, "but everyone was against me. Those silly little creatures for a scientific expedition! Camels and horses were the only possible thing for our importance! But our horses break under their loads and our camels get mired in the pass,

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while those little burros trot cheerfully ahead through everything."

There seemed to be nothing we could do for the camels; they must await clear weather and get their baggage through in any way possible. We left at three o'clock, still expecting to reach Gulcha easily. But the pass proved heavy going for the arba also. Its owner had brought only one horse, and now declared he could not go uphill in this mud. We loaned him first one, then two, and at last five horses to help pull the arba. The rest took short cuts up the grassy hill to get out of the miry road rather than to shorten the distance.

An event now occurred which marked the turning point in my relations with my horse Alai. The top of the pass was very wide and marshy. In one spot, some of the riders made a detour to avoid a bog, while others thought they had found a pathway through. I followed the latter into the watery mud half hidden by rank grass. Each horse sank deeper than the one before him. My horse came last; his forefeet reached firm ground, but his hind legs sank suddenly clear to his haunches. The terrified beast struggled to break free; he pulled himself out by sliding me backwards into the swamp.

I was surprised to learn how easy it is to fall off a horse! As I crawled out of the mire I found that I was not hurt in the least, though I was soaked to the skin in filthy water. As I ran towards Alai to take his bridle, he snorted wickedly and wheeled,

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kicking his hind legs violently towards me, while I was still at some distance. The beast was beside himself with rage and terror; three men were needed to catch him. "We thought he also kicked at you as he left the swamp, but apparently not, as you are unhurt," they said. The incident passed with little thought, but it was a turning point. From that time on I knew I was not strong enough to handle Alai, while he, on his part, regarded me as a useless encumbrance, to be endured only when men were about to enforce obedience.

Nikitin decided to wait just beyond the pass, while bringing up the baggage from the arba, which was now hopelessly mired some distance below. I was already chilling in the wet wind that blew through the pass, and proposed to warm myself by walking ahead to Gulcha. Even if we were ready to ride, I preferred walking to sitting in the mess of mud and water which encircled my hips. Soon I was swinging down a road whose red clay mud was far stickier and more slippery than anything yet encountered. I quite understood that camels could not make this descent. Even in my high hobnailed boots, I found it hard to keep from falling. Soon I became comfortably warm from my exertions.

The rain stopped as I passed to the other side of the hills, though I could see that it still hung over the pass behind me. My road led through high pastures, heavy with grass, but with few flowers. I passed many yurts of caravan men, each a centre for great

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heaps of baggage, all awaiting a change of weather to proceed through the pass. Around one yurt were scores of cotton bales coming from Kashgar to the mills of Fergana. The owner of the yurt beyond was clearly bound in the opposite direction, for about him clustered hundreds of great iron pots — the one and universal cooking vessel of the high pastures and the Chinese towns beyond. There seemed enough of these pots to prepare lamb stew for all Kirghizia.

Fierce dogs prowled about these yurts, watchful protectors against marauders of the night. Usually they growled threateningly from a distance, which I was careful to keep between myself and their yurts. But once or twice a dog followed me down the road, apparently wishing to attack, and I discovered one reason why revolvers are thought necessary in these wilds. My only recourse was to face about and angrily throw stones, as I had seen Kirghiz women doing. This seemed effective. Occasionally a master came to the door of his yurt, looked at me wonderingly, and called off the dog. The worst of the dogs was chained; the growls with which he tugged at his fetters in an effort to get at me were most disquieting, and made me glad I was not traveling the road after nightfall when he would be unleashed.

These yurts were located only in the high pastures, where fodder was thick. The valley at last narrowed, and I followed a foaming torrent between steep walls, where grass and yurts disappeared. With the vanishing of human signs, there vanished also

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everything which marked these mountains off from other mountains in the world. I might have been in Switzerland or our Western Cascades. Jagged cliffs, sprinkled with yellow and red poppies, foaming cascades, great rocks wet with spray, steep green slopes, and occasional views of far snow peaks — these are the universal mountain speech recalling many climes and latitudes.

Again I began to meet both Kirghiz and Uzbeks, always riding, sometimes speaking Russian. Always they assured me that Gulcha was "near," a pleasantly vague word that might mean anything from one kilometre to a hundred. It really meant only the comfortable Eastern habit of telling what they know you wish to hear. I needed to have Gulcha "near," for the sun was sinking and the wind grew colder, and my body began to get raw and red where the wet clothes chafed my skin. I was growing tired, and the wet boots blistered my feet, so I could no longer keep up a speed sufficient for warmth. I came to the tent of a Russian road gang, and learned at last, to my dismay, that Gulcha was a definite six kilometres away. It was now six o'clock, but I still hoped to reach Gulcha before darkness.

The welcome town came at last in view; several large white buildings in it looked from a distance quite European. It seemed very near, but as I approached I found myself separated from it by a wide river, the only bridge across which was a kilometre and a half upstream. Beyond this bridge was a smaller stream,

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fordable and hence not deemed worthy a bridge of its own. Yet it was fully forty feet wide, quite swift, and it was impossible for me to tell how deep. Beyond, on the heights, I saw houses and men in European clothing; I shouted, but they did not hear. I waited some time disconsolately, hoping the caravan would arrive. Then, as it was growing dark and no help came, I took off my boots and forded the stream, finding it only knee-deep, but very cold. Having nothing with which to dry my feet, I did not put on my stockings, but thrust bare feet into heavy boots. This was a bad mistake, for long before I reached Gulcha I was crippled from blisters.

There came a house, three Russians who gave me tea and advised me to wait at the "Red Chai-khana" for my friends. I stumbled along the miry road in utter darkness, finding it more by the line of telegraph poles against the sky than by any difference between its mud and the mud of the fields. Then came a light or two, the barking of a whole townful of dogs as I approached, and at last a large room opening directly on the muddy street, the Red Chai-khana to which I had been directed.

The Red Chai-khana was a communist attempt to rival the ancient caravanserai of Gulcha and combine propaganda with tea. Mine host was a friendly Uzbek; in fact the small room was quite full of friendly Uzbeks, all of whom wanted to know whence I came and where was my horse. Some of them understood a little Russian, and I explained my plight

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and ordered not only tea, but plov for a caravan of nine people who were still to come. The placing of this order, and the advancing of three rubles to buy the necessary meat, gave me at once some standing as a member of an organized caravan. Mine host assured me that if my friends did n't come that night, the plov could be reheated in the morning.

The room, like the usual Central Asian chai-khana, was of two levels: a narrow outer porch which stood two feet above the mud of the street and projected in a corridor back into the covered space; and the rest of the room, which was a foot and a half higher, carpeted with mats. All muddy boots must be left on the lower space; the matted floor was for sleepers. There was no extra room where I might retire to dry my clothes, but I ordered a special fire in the alcove which served as kitchen, and stood above it until the sensations of cold and wet were no longer as strong as the growing sense of weariness which rose to claim me. I drank some tea and ate some apples, — my only food since dawn. Then my host pulled forth a wooden bench about five feet long and carpeted with felt, and offered it to me for a bed. A shabby quilt lay on it and a bundle resembling a pillow, which on examination I found to be the roll of his extra clothing. It was clearly his own bed he was giving me; nowhere else in the chai-khana could I see any other storage place for the personal effects of its host. The bench was a foot too short, and the quilt's cleanliness questionable, but I was weary. I wrapped myself

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up, shivering, and fell at once into a doze, awaking at intervals to the sudden barking of the town's dogs with the hope that my caravan had come. After midnight I gave up hopes, and, being by this time reasonably dry and free from the cramps that bothered me earlier, I fell into a sound sleep that lasted till morning.

The coming of the sun in Gulcha! Two mornings earlier how I had wilted under the sun on the blistering road to Langar! But now, how I revived under the sun which dried the mud of Gulcha! I woke at dawn, dragged my sleeping bench into the narrow porch above the street, and thawed myself in its rays till I was at last completely dry. Then appetite came, and I asked my host where the plov was that I had ordered for nine people the night before. I found that this canny provider had only cooked the meat and fat, which I had paid for, but had decided not to put in the rice, which was his own, till my caravan should arrive. Now, however, he said it should be quickly prepared; for he knew quite well that sun brings caravans to Gulcha. And already by half-past eight I moved out of the sun, finding it too hot for comfort!

The caravan came at half-past nine. Failing to get the arba up the pass, they had been forced to unload it and redistribute the baggage among the pack animals, a time-consuming process. They had camped in the open fields, putting up a tent, but suffering much from the wet till the sun had dried them

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out. All welcomed the news that plov would soon be ready.

It was planned to spend a few hours in Gulcha consulting the veterinary about some of our horses and doing the last marketing. No settlement lay beyond us at which purchases might be made. As I walked down the one muddy street, now rapidly drying, I found the shops of many craftsmen — iron forgers, harness menders, and at last the Chinese shoemaker whom I sought. He opened the seams of my boots which had raised blisters and widened them by insertions of new leather — a great improvement in comfort, though not in appearance. Since the chill of the nights already warned me that my serape was insufficient, I sought for a place to buy a sheepskin coat or any warm clothing. I found a Consumers Coöperative and a Kirghiz Trading Store, but neither had any winter goods. They told me I might find such things in the higher valleys, probably by purchasing direct from some Kirghiz.

Gulcha is a "rayon" capital; under its government come the Kirghiz as far as the Alai, and to it reports the Soviet of the High Pastures. I sought the government buildings to learn the location of this nomad soviet. The government and party offices were in bare shacks of buildings, which, unlike the usual mud houses of Gulcha, were made of wood. I met here a young Russian, recently sent from Tashkent as organizer of the Communist Youth among the Kirghiz about Gulcha. I asked if my impressions so far re-

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ceived of Kirghiz and Uzbeks were true ones. The Uzbeks seemed to me friendly and affable, the Kirghiz dour and suspicious, as if they hated strangers.

"No," he said; "the Uzbeks are a city and village folk, more sophisticated and hence at ease in approaching you. The Kirghiz are shy and ill at ease with strangers; but they are basically more hospitable. If you go to the yurt of a Kirghiz as guest, he will give you all he has. True, he has n't much to give. He will refuse money for his gifts — the Kirghiz consider a man evil who takes money for hospitality. You may not find this true along the Pamir highway, where they are spoiled by much contact with us.

"However," he added, "it is hard to work among the Kirghiz because of their backwardness. If in a village of five hundred households, five persons are found who read, it is a good number. When we organize a Young Communist local of fourteen members, if one of these can read even very simple communications we already consider it good. How can such people be organized to build a socialist commonwealth? Clearly, the first thing is to teach them to read. Our work along this line really began last February, when the new Okrug government was organized at Osh, with a rayon at Gulcha. In the last month and a half we have organized 350 members, and started classes for illiterates among them."

From another office I learned that the Soviet of the High Pastures which I sought in the Alai would be found at Sary-tash, not far from where we should

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enter the valley. This was good news; it made it easy for me to visit the Pasture Soviet and stay with them until the troops should pass on July 3. Sary-tash had been mentioned as their first halt in the Alai.

I returned to the Red Chai-khana for the meal of long-expected plov. The others also had finished their business; the horses had fed and rested; we were ready to start. We feasted first on the hot, meat-flavored rice, with tea and apples, these being the chief food stuffs which Gulcha afforded. Our host, we learned, had a way of disposing of garbage which seemed to us unique and original, though doubtless it is centuries old in Gulcha. He took a plate of apple peelings and similar refuse, and deftly tossed it up on his thatched roof, where the birds found it. The roofs of Gulcha were a mingling of thatch, and mud, and growing grass, and birds' nests.

We left Gulcha at four o'clock under a sun still hot enough to be exhausting. From this time forth the weather was to be sun and wind. The rains of Gulcha were over.

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VI

THE TRAIL TO THE HIGH PASTURES

THE trail to the high pastures, on which we set out from Gulcha, has been followed from days immemorial by thousands of Kirghiz, moving with the coming of spring from the drying valleys to their summer homes in the heights. Just when began the yearly trek to the Vale of Alai is unrecorded, for Kirghiz are an illiterate folk, leaving few records. Chinese sources speak of a Kirghiz Empire in mid-Siberia in the first and second century B.C., extending as far north as Lake Baikal, and as far west as eastern Turkestan. Owners of so much land hardly needed the Alai.

Russian investigators also place the original home of Kirghiz in the Yenisei Valley, from which part split off in the second century B.C. and went southward, traveling for summer pastures into the Tien Shan Mountains, which now form a boundary between Russian and Chinese Turkestan. Under the pressure of tribes from the east, the Kirghiz drifted slowly westward to their present hills and valleys. It is known that when Genghis Khan swept Asia in the twelfth century, he found Kirghiz where they are to-day, and they welcomed him in alliance, being cousins of the Mongols. It seems, therefore, that

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some time between the second century B.C. and the coming of Genghis, the Kirghiz began their yearly journeys to the Vale of Alai.

In the lowlands of Kirghizia ruled a succession of emperors, dominating the Kirghiz by superior culture, but far weaker than they in survival. Strange vanished names like the Yue-chi (200 B.C.), the Huns (200 A.D.), the Uighurs from the Altai (eighth century) governed in turn the rich valleys. Then many Turkish tribes swept through the region, chief among which was the Karahanid dynasty, bringing Islam in the ninth century. They were overthrown by Genghis, but rose again in Timur. Later, the Uzbeks came from the north, a strong people, thus blocking definitely the Kirghiz progress westward.

During all these centuries, while empires fell in the lowlands, the Kirghiz ruled the hills. They had, indeed, their share of sanguinary engagements. In the sixteenth century the Kalmucks from China pressed against them, confining them narrowly to Fergana and the Alai. Two centuries later, the Chinese subdued the Kalmucks by massacres so thorough that the Kirghiz drifted back into the empty spaces of their former pasture routes. Still later they strained restlessly under the Khanate of Khokand, and after it fell, in 1875, they fought the Russians.

The last determined stand of any folk in Central Asia against the advancing Russian conquest was made by the Kirghiz of the Alai Valley, under the

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famous woman Kurban-Jan-Datka, known as the "Empress of Alai." Widow of Alim Bek, a well-known chieftain, she continued to rule the Kirghiz through her sons. From the high Alai pastures she defied the Russians, till on a trek to her winter village she was captured by a party of their troops. General Skobelef, charged with extending Russian rule in Central Asia, chose to conciliate this "Empress," and won her as his ally. Her fate thereafter was tragic. Her eldest son, renouncing her influence, fought against the Russians till he fled through Afghanistan to Mecca. Two of her other sons, continuing the ancient practice of bringing contraband goods from China into a realm where they once were masters, got into a quarrel with a Russian customs official and slew him. They were executed for it, and the Empress-Mother went insane from grief.

Under the pressure of Russian influence and the curtailment of lands brought by Russian settlers, a movement toward settled farms began among the Kirghiz. The completely nomad life, with its patriarchal rule, began to die. A new life, based on land tenure and accumulated wealth, struggled against the old. Yet life remained half-nomad. How could it be otherwise in Southern Kirghizia, where there are only 250,000 hectares of irrigated land and 420,000 of dry land available for farming, while 2,700,000 hectares of seasonal pastures exist in the hills? The cattle wealth of Kirghiz is still greater than all the produce of its soil.

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So the typical Kirghiz family to-day is still half-nomad, possessing both cattle and land, on which he plants crudely—chiefly forage crops. In winter they live in earth huts in the valleys; in spring they scratch the soil and cast on it seed; then they take up the trek to the high pastures. The numbers thus journeying are less than in olden days, but still enough to crowd the trail from Gulcha to the Alai.

We left Gulcha at four o'clock on the afternoon of June 26, and wound steadily southward up the canyon of the Gulcha River. It was very hot, and the horses were tormented by flies. My horse, Alai, either more sensitive or less controlled than others, tossed violently most of the time, sinking his head between his front legs and kicking his hind legs together. The motion was nerve-racking. As the sun sank, the flies and the kicking grew less, and we had leisure to rejoice in the view behind us. Range beyond range of hills shaded from green to deep purple, and far down between them under a rising mist wound silver curves of the Gulcha River. Ahead of us were chiefly cliffs, and sometimes between their breaks a snow peak.

We camped at dusk near a ruined stable, in which we found another scientific expedition, much smaller than ours, but fully as important. It consisted of Professor Vaviloff (he who had already befriended me) and two botanists, with two native caravan men. They were sent out from the Institute of Applied Botany under the Academy of Science in Leningrad,

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and were bound for Chinese Turkestan to study and collect plants, chiefly varieties of wheat. Thence they would go north through Seven Rivers Land to the Turkestan–Siberian Railway; then they would investigate wheat in western and eastern Siberia, Manchuria, and Japan.

Professor Vaviloff told me that he had visited in recent years more than forty countries, collecting plants for various uses in Russia. Last year he spent in Morocco, Abyssinia, and other African lands; next year he will go to India, Siam, Burma. Six years ago his organization brought from North, South, and Central America the cottons which are to-day transforming the cotton growing of Turkestan. The Institute in Leningrad, of which he is chief, is manned by over a thousand civil servants, and is outranked in size only by the Bureau of Plants in the United States Department of Agriculture.

He discussed with me the difference between his Institute of Applied Botany and the American Bureau of Plants, with whose publications he is familiar. "The American Bureau's work is almost entirely practical," he said, "with little attention to ultimate theories in botany. For leadership in theory, you in America look to your universities. With us, on the other hand, our Institute is expected to lead university thinking in theories, as well as to help the country's farming in practice. Thus, the practical collecting of plants for crossbreeding is done by my botanist here, Dr. Popoff. I myself am specializing in the

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history of human agriculture, a purely theoretical subject, seeking its origins in the lands of Central Asia.

"The Pamirs which lie ahead of you are most inhospitable to man. No one can live in their desolate wastes except occasional Kirghiz, relying rather on Tibetan yaks than horses. Yet on all far sides of this dreary land are deep rich valleys, so varied and fertile that the beginnings of human life are traced to this region. The Vale of Kashmir to the south, Chinese Turkestan to the east, and the valley of the Oxus to the west, bear traces of the earliest home of man. These mid-Asian valleys, with hot sun, plentiful water, and great differentiation of climate, produced that abundant variety of life from which new species sprang. Only last year in isolated valleys of the Western Pamirs we discovered several varieties of wheat which differ from all cultivated varieties, and point back to the time when wheat grew wild. It is such plants," he concluded, "that I seek and study, to work out the story of man's first attempts to farm the earth."

Three scientific expeditions I had met in a few days: the Geological Expedition, the Plant Expedition, and the Economic Expedition, whose members I saw in the Osh horse market, bound for a study of Kirghiz households. This bore testimony to the vitality of scientific interest in Russia. I hoped indeed that we should see more of Professor Vaviloff, who talked so fascinatingly of the beginnings of

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human farming. But he was traveling light and fast. "Our route is not as cold as yours will be," he said. "So we carry no tent and only a single blanket each. We sacrifice all to speed. We cannot camp in the open, but only in Kirghiz yurts or in ruined stables like this one, where we build a sheltered fire. We have good horses and do not stop for noonday." By noon the next day, to my regret, Vaviloff's party turned to the east by a high short-cut, and left us.

Throughout that day we met sections of a large caravan traveling from Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan to the Russian railway. It was clear that here were people of some importance, for the women were not riding, but swung in hammocks elaborately attached to front and rear horses. A high Chinese official, we learned, was going from Kashgar to Peking, and must take this roundabout way for reasons of speed and safety. To reach the central cities of his own country, he must first turn his back on them and ride three weeks on horse in the opposite direction! Then he would go a week by train to Moscow, still in the opposite direction, and only then at last could he start by the Trans–Siberian towards the goal he desired!

It was an astonishing revelation of the separateness of Chinese Turkestan from China, and its economic dependence on Russia, under present conditions of transport. The only alternative to this tremendous detour was to go many thousand miles by camel across the Gobi, where not only nature's

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barriers of desert and mountain, but the bandit bands and warring generals of northwest China and southern Mongolia, threatened his way. It is almost impossible to-day to take this route from Chinese Turkestan to China.

At noon we rested in the shade of trees by Gulcha River, bathing and washing clothes which dried almost at once in the sun. Then we stumbled and splashed through several swift fords to Sufi-Kurgan, a post of the frontier police along our route. Here our permits were examined and our route registered and we were given such information as we desired about the conditions ahead.

There are two kinds of armed force to be found in the Pamirs: the regular army, consisting of young recruits in their two years of training, who journey south by slow stages to the forts of the frontier; and the permanent troops of the G.P.U. or political police, charged with the frontier task of checking bandits and contraband. These last are swift, expert horsemen, riding by night through the passes on the trail of the lawless. Because of the great spaces, and the nature of the lawbreaking, these police go in groups like small army detachments. They follow chiefly the trade routes and the more or less inhabited regions, where they are here to-day and gone to-morrow. They have a professional system of speeding, — first walk, then trot, then gallop, then walk again, at equal intervals. One of their couriers, arriving with us at Sufi-Kurgan, had left Osh the previous morning,

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making in one and a half days a journey on which we had spent four days.

There followed again much splashing across the river bed, to a camp site recommended by the post, some kilometres further on, where a Kirghiz agreed to rent us a night's forage on his young wheat for twelve rubles for our twenty horses. The water at this camp site was distant and poor in quality, but here again the need of pasture was paramount. The river bed through which we splashed so often was wide and rocky and grassless, while the grassy slopes were without fresh streams.

Next day near noon we rode through a brilliant pass of bright red cliffs, known as Kizil-beless. About us began to appear jagged rocky peaks, creased with snow, near enough now to add a perceptible chill to the air. We dropped to lunch again on Gulcha River beyond the pass, and I find these notes in my diary: "Writing at 2 P.M. We started with exhausting heat, had two hours rain which turned very cold, then we crossed through a pass and it turned blazing hot again! We dropped to the river, and already it is very cold with sky overcast. There is no decent weather here at any time. Either one is shivering or burning." Similar complaints were to continue all through the Pamirs; weather shifted rapidly from one extreme to the other; at no time was there any weather that could be enjoyed.

During the lunch we had our first taste of broiled bacon. When the bacon was brought out raw

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according to custom, I asked if there was not a frying pan somewhere. It seemed there was, but that it was very rusty and dirty. With earth and leaves and water I removed most of the incrustations, laid it flat on the edge of our fire, since there was nothing on which to rest it, and declared my intention of improving our bacon by broiling. This announcement caused some incredulity, which changed to delight at the first taste of the half-charred, half-raw bacon which burned our fingers.

As if to take the edge off my exploit, Tatiana Borisovna, the woman geologist, began an argument in which she asserted that Russian cooking is the best in the world. In two things Russia excels, she maintained; it is undoubtedly the freest land and has the best cooking. I stared in amazement, suspecting irony; then, seeing that she was quite serious, I replied that Russia might be the most interesting land, and supreme in many good qualities, but that she had picked out precisely the things which Russia had none of — freedom and good cooking. A hot argument ensued, convincing no one. When in the course of the discussion I mentioned the freedom of movement offered in America, where one can travel at a moment's notice to any town, without need of any reservations ahead, and with no registration with the police, Tatiana Borisovna looked shocked. "What a very disorganized country you have," she cried.

Professor Nikitin changed the subject by enumerating the changes made by the World War in these

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valleys, which he had visited some years before. One might have supposed that the nomad heart of Asia should have escaped the devastation wrought by the quarrels of Europe. But the Tsar's armed forces needed a better meat diet than Russian peasants and workers had ever dreamed of eating. The army commissary took the sheep from the Kirghiz, paying a price in rubles which, even if they had been sound money, were worthless to the nomad. His life and wealth was in his live stock; he had not learned the city trick of making rubles breed as sheep do. The taking of sheep for rubles meant to him beggary.

Worse than this, under the wasteful management of war time, increased by the usual inefficiency of Central Asia, the sheep were slaughtered before there was adequate cold storage. They rotted along the mountain roads by tens of thousands, where the beggared Kirghiz saw them. The following year came a decree of conscript labor; the free wanderers of the hills and plains were to be taken to work under hot suns for alien farmers.

The Kirghiz revolted, blindly; their uprising took the form of an indiscriminate slaughter of Russian peasants. They were put down ruthlessly by the army of Central Asia together with some detachments released from the front for the purpose of quelling this revolt in the rear. The Kirghiz revolt spread to other native peoples of Central Asia, in a nationalist uprising which preceded the Russian Revolution by a year. It was one of the minor engagements

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of the World War, the whisper of which never reached beyond the great barrier of flame raging then in the West. But it left a tragic mark on Central Asia. Possibly ten thousand Russian settlers were wiped out by the Kirghiz; and the insurgent natives were massacred even more ruthlessly till they fled into China, where again they were slain and plundered of live stock. Only a remnant returned, after the October Revolution. Many had been sold to slavery in Chinese Turkestan; many more had perished.

The great trek of the Kirghiz to the Alai summer pasture had been much lessened since that day, said Professor Nikitin. There were fewer Kirghiz and fewer animals; moreover, the idea of a settled farm life was increasing. But to one journeying on this trail for the first time, the numbers still seemed large. Twenty or thirty caravans we encountered in a day. Many, it is true, were trading caravans of camels or burros, en route between Osh and Kashgar; but many others were Kirghiz villages going to the Alai. Their horses were gay with many-colored trappings, somewhat tawdry and worn, but from a distance brilliant. The women especially were colorfully dressed, with tall voluminous white headdresses indicating holiday attire. They carried bridal chests in their laps, full of the family possessions; or they crowded babies about them, two or three to a horse. All along the grassy spots on the watercourses we saw them camping.

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The second evening after Sufi-Kurgan we camped on a grassy slope not far from the Toldik Pass, which we should ascend on the morrow. Though dusk had not yet fallen, it was already cold and raw; as our tent was being pitched I wandered over to a near-by yurt of a Kirghiz caravan man, whose fire burned temptingly near the entrance. As befitted a nomad, he understood thoroughly the art of camping. He welcomed me hospitably and at once arranged, out of coats and dunnage, the most comfortable seat I had enjoyed since leaving Osh. From his few words of Russian I made out that the owner of the yurt was traveling with his brother and one hired man, carrying dry goods on his eleven horses and two burros for the State Trading Company to the frontier town of Irkestan. Thence the goods would be taken by Chinese caravans to Kashgar; but he himself, with his horses, would bring a different load of freight back to Osh for the State Trading Company. He worked on contract by the journey.

The Kirghiz yurt, of which his was a poor example, is far superior to any civilized tent for a life of camping. It is better shelter against both sun and cold. It is a round tent of felted wool which is a solid barrier to heat or moisture. A pile of family quilts and coats are heaped against one side and pulled down as the night advances. In cold regions the yurt is closed by a hanging door of felt, and the smoke of the fire within ascends through a hole in the centre of the roof with some accuracy, though a contrary

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wind can fill the yurt with eye-smarting smoke. Such is the habitation developed by centuries of nomad life in Asia, and adopted across a continent, from the Mongol nomads of the east to the Turcoman nomads by the western Caspian.

My host for the evening had, however, a cruder yurt, adapted to easy traveling in that it could be taken down quickly, but sacrificing for this some of the solidity of the typical yurt. Even his poor adaptation was so much more comfortable than our tent in the chill winds that blew down the pass that I delayed with him long, watching him prepare his supper. In this also he was an expert, making efficient use of his chief utensil and cooking with little waste motion. Over his fire he placed an iron tripod with a flat open top into which his big iron pot fitted. As soon as the pot was well heated, he poured into it a small amount of water, which promptly boiled and which he swished about with a brush of leaves to clean the pot. When the pot was as clean as fire and water would make it, he put in fresh water, added a chunk of unsavory-looking soup meat, and later threw in a cupful of small onions, chopped cucumbers, and other greens.

The soup soon boiled with an enticing aroma. He brought from a sack two or three lepeshka. These were already more than a week old, and could only be broken by pounding them with stones. He softened the broken pieces of hard bread in a cup of soup, and thus made a substantial supper. I then observed that nestling under the iron pot a battered teapot

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was boiling. He hospitably offered me soup, which I declined, and tea, which I accepted. I went back to our chilly tent convinced that the Kirghiz know more about camping than we do. Nothing could have been easier or swifter than his motions.

Next morning the road narrowed swiftly to a rugged trail, winding upward through a wildly beautiful canyon watered by many streams and brilliant with mountain flowers. From the freshness of the air and the clearness of the streams it was evident we were approaching the head of a pass. Then we began to zigzag back and forth across the face of a steep cliff of rock and gravel, where a wide, firm caravan road had been built with much labor. Midway up the cliff we met a large caravan of heavily laden horses coming down. There were several hundred animals, with drivers sparsely scattered among them. At first we passed them easily with a pleasant rhythm, they on one side of the road and we on the other, moving as in a not too intricate dance. But soon our pack animals became mixed with theirs at a bend in the zigzag, and started downhill while some of theirs started up. There ensued much shouting of drivers and stampeding of animals. I held Alai some seventy feet back of the mêlée, and, as I thought, quite out of danger. But suddenly I saw that the horses on the next zigzag some fifty feet above me, restless with waiting and with the sounds of tumult, were leaving the trail and catapulting straight down the slope in my direction. There was barely

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time to get out of the way of these laden, frightened beasts, but Alai moved swiftly when he saw trouble, and we escaped them. My respect for Alai's ability constantly rose, but his respect for me did not. He was a skillful beast, but most of his skill he used to escape labor or kick violently against bridling; on this occasion, however, he acted well in our joint interests.

We passed through Toldik at a height of over 11,000 feet, and then dropped gradually through grassy meadows. We felt keen disappointment, for there was no view. For days we had been nearing the Roof of the World. The peak of Kaufmann, now named Mt. Lenin, more than 23,000 feet in air, was just over the range. Yet day after day we saw only low valleys and lesser peaks. From Toldik we expected more, but the pass was shut in. We must content ourselves with the beauty of grassy meadows and slopes of green.

Shortly beyond Toldik the path divided, the main trail going east through Sary-tash to Irkestan on the border of China. We took the path to the right, which would enter the Vale of Alai some thirty-five kilometres west of Sary-tash, and nearer by that much to the region which the geologists must prospect. And suddenly we were alone. There were no more caravans from Osh to Kashgar, and no more troops of nomads gayly jaunting along the road to the high pastures. But we came soon upon some yurts of Kirghiz who had settled for the summer; we

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were already in the Alai basin, though not yet in sight of the valley.

The rest of the afternoon, and all the next morning, we journeyed leisurely down a pleasant ravine to the Vale of Alai. We passed occasional yurts of Kirghiz, pasturing their flocks in the thick grass of these meadows. Always the women came out and offered us sour milk to drink; often they patted my heavy mountain boots, uttering sounds of approval. I learned that these boots, which I found oppressive because of their weight, were much admired because their strong thick leather gave indication of lasting longer than their own boots, of which the upper part was as flexible as a stocking and very light.

In one of the yurts we stopped, urged thereto by the friendly Kirghiz. The felted covering had been drawn widely back from the frame of the roof, so that the sun might pour freely into the interior. Our whole party crowded in, followed by half a dozen Kirghiz. The earth was covered by a carpet of black felted wool ornamented with white wool. On the usual tripod stove the women were boiling their sour milk. This they poured for us into wooden bowls, black with fire and age; Kirghiz containers are mostly of wood, a light and enduring material.

Two kinds of sour milk they offered: *airann,* which is ordinary sour milk boiled, the staple diet of the Kirghiz every day; and the famous koumiss, which is mare's milk fermented, the drink of hospitality. The Kirghiz are milk experts, using not only cow's

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milk and mare's milk, but milk of ewes and goats and yaks as well. This milk is soured and boiled into various liquid and solid foods.

I passed my hard candies about among the Kirghiz, one candy to each person. They smiled appreciation of its sweetness. Then the women all made signs of washing hands and washing clothes and indicated that they would like some soap. This we found to be a universal desire among the Kirghiz. For centuries gone they have washed clothes and cleaned house with fire and water only, but now that civilization has made them aware of the ease which soap lends to labor, they want it. Unfortunately, we had no extra supply to give them.

As we rode down the ravine we began to catch glimpses of the mighty snow massifs beyond the Vale of Alai, the Trans-Alai range of solid snow peaks, very different from the rocky peaks veined with snow among which we had been traveling. Then suddenly we emerged in the main valley and saw the mountains towering beyond it, filling the horizon, lofty, white, stupendous. Beyond that range, we knew, lay at last the Pamirs. Between us and the peaks stretched a vast rolling plain of grass, dotted with yurts and sheep and horses — the Vale of Alai, paradise of live stock.

We made camp at once, though it was still forenoon. Professor Nikitin had decided to feed his horses well (he realized that their condition had been poor when we left Osh), and meantime to send two

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swift riders up the valley to Sary-tash, to see if the Pasture Soviet could find for us more horses and laborers. Meantime we struck up relations with the Kirghiz near by. Since we had no wood, they invited us to boil our tea on their fire of camel dung; I gave some candies to the children and took their pictures, and they reciprocated by offering me milk. It was fresh milk, for which I was grateful, as I never acquired a taste for airann. Three of the younger girls, whose heads were decorated with scores of tiny black braids sticking out in all directions, were milking a large flock of a hundred ewes. I brought a large mug and received the milk directly into it; the flavor was deliciously rich and sweet. I learned that of all the various kinds of milk used by the Kirghiz that of ewes is considered the richest. Next comes that of the yak, a noble beast which appears to thrive when there is only rock for pasture, and furnishes milk and wool and transport for the whole family. We saw these creatures now for the first time—thick, stocky black animals somewhat smaller than a cow, but more solid.

The girls next brought us some *keimak,* the Kirghiz substitute for butter and cream—a heavy fat white stuff swimming in a thin whey. They offered us much koumiss. Professor Nikitin said it was of unusual quality. "Not outside the high pastures will you get such koumiss." Even with such recommendation I never properly acquired the taste. We gave them in return tea, sugar, and some already hardened

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lepeshka. They received these things with joy, and, not to be outdone, brought us a huge plate of slaughtered lamb.

We began to wonder if this exchange of presents was to go on forever, but the reason behind their interest was soon divulged. They asked if we had a doctor. One of their old women had many pains and they knew that white folks always traveled with "powerful medicine." Tatiana Borisovna, who had had some sort of first-aid training, was urged to go over "and have a look at the old lady." Returning, she reported that the old woman had a headache and a pain in the chest and coughed violently, but that this had not been of long duration. From this she deduced bronchitis or something similar. It was decided to give her pyramidon at once, and a mustard plaster and aspirin at bedtime. They appeared very grateful; but I am not sure how much we added to the reputation of the "white man's medicine." The woman's basic trouble was clearly old age and the hardships of nomad existence, and for this we had no cure to offer.

As evening drew on, the yurt was much warmer than our tent, so I accepted the offer of a pile of quilts to sit on, and tried, through Artumov, to engage in conversation. The women were especially eager to question me, wondering what kind of a person I might be, traveling so far from home into their pastures. I was Russian, of course? No? Then what? And what was America? Was my husband along? No?

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Then how had he given me permission to go so far from home? Had I left my children behind also?

I explained that I had neither husband nor children, and could consequently travel as I chose. At first they could not understand this; they made Artumov repeat it several times to be sure it was true. Was it indeed possible for a woman to live without a master? And to travel where she chose? They themselves had been sold in early marriage, as had all their acquaintances; they had never thought of a woman except as belonging to some man, as the milker of his cattle and the maker of his yurt and all his utensils. They chattered excitedly with each other, struggling with this new idea. Then a look of comprehension came gradually into their faces. "Good, very good," said the older woman, with emphasis.

The men, it seemed to me, looked less pleased at the turn our discussion was taking. Clearly I was one of these new Bolsheviki, who went about unsettling the women with desires for freedom. They stared at me long and sombrely till I became uneasy. They stared also when I refused the final bowl of keimak; surely, I thought, the laws of hospitality do not require one to eat everything that is offered, indefinitely. Had we offended in some way? The continued stare had in it something remote and hostile, a gaze across many centuries between incompatible epochs. Yet they might have been merely wondering about us and our customs.

It was partly this gaze that determined me to start

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early next morning for Sary-tash, before Professor Nikitin and his party should leave in the opposite direction. If I must secure a guide from this hospitable, but staring, group of men, let them not know that my caravan was gone forever, and that I was alone in the Alai. Nikitin made the arrangements, giving the impression that the group was responsible for me. We found the men rather unwilling to bestir themselves; one at last agreed to go for six rubles, on a trip which would take him only a day. The price seemed high, but men in the Alai are lazy. The high pastures are dedicated to loafing and to weddings, to feasts and hospitality. In the high pastures only women work — they who work always among the Kirghiz.

It took three men to catch my horse Alai. A whole day's rest in the valley for which he was named had improved his girth and worsened his character. "Don't go near that horse without a whip," I heard Artumov say to one of the men. "A fine animal, but a rotten character," he added to me. It was not an encouraging thought for an inexperienced horsewoman, setting off alone in the high pastures with a Kirghiz guide to find the Pasture Soviet.

Our two emissaries returned from Sary-tash, reporting that the Pasture Soviet was unable to give either horses or men. "They have not even yet received their official seal, and they have no jurisdiction over the district to which you go." The plain fact was that no male Kirghiz wished to profane the

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beautiful summer in the high pastures by any labor, even for good pay. They reported that Sary-tash was four hours' ride at a fast gait.

I said good-bye to Professor Nikitin with real regret. In our few talks and in the expressions of himself in camp conflicts I had found him an unusual man, with a dry appraisal of life which was coolly scientific and very just, and a silent endurance of physical hardships which were proving trying to his strength. Others of the party I knew less well. Feodorov, who supported me once in argument, and often helped me with my horse, I was to hear of again through a death notice in a Moscow paper. He never returned from the Pamirs, but was drowned in crossing a mountain river. Yet he was an able swimmer and a good horseman.

At 11.30 I left our first camp in the Alai, and swung along more swiftly than when with the caravan, eastward on the floor of the Alai Valley. To the right, across the rolling plain, the gigantic range of the Trans-Alai reared its snowy bulk — the largest mountain massif I had ever seen. We forded many rivers — some of them swift, but none of them deep. From time to time we came upon groups of yurts. My Kirghiz guide moved ahead, paying me little attention till he saw that my horse Alai was slackening pace. Then he rode behind me, beating Alai occasionally, for he wished to reach Sary-tash and return by nightfall. These beatings resulted in side springs by Alai, but not much progress. Then he took a

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lead rope and loped ahead tugging Alai, and in this ignoble manner I approached Sary-tash at 3.45 in the afternoon, almost as fast as our swift riders had made it.

A broad sloping valley led upward to the left from the Vale of Alai, and was dotted with clusters of yurts scattered over two miles of landscape. This was Sary-tash, a summer encampment only; for in winter the whole valley, with elevation of 10,000 feet, would be deep in snow. The yurts were in clusters of three or four, each group housing a family with its many relatives; these separate groups were known as *auls* (pronounced *a-ools*), and were separated from each other by as much as half a kilometre, to allow plenty of grazing room. A dozen such auls were visible at once as I looked up the valley.

We turned at last toward a couple of yurts, above one of which fluttered a red flag. Here, I knew, was government, but what branch of it? Was it the Medical Point, or the Pasture Soviet, or the District Court? As we came nearer I saw great piles of raw wool, and a score of iron pots heaped outside the yurt, and knew I was in the presence of trade. It was, then, the station of the Gostorg, or State Trading Company, that I was approaching. In response to my shouts there came from the yurt a small, shriveled Russian who grinned in a friendly manner and casually bade me dismount and have tea. He was quite clearly accustomed to arrivals of all kinds from all quarters.

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VII

THE SOVIET OF THE HIGH PASTURES

SARY-TASH is the summer encampment of yurts which by virtue of plentiful grass has become the temporary capital of the Vale of Alai. Water also is plentiful here, but not good water; rather a network of muddy opaque streams drawing color from the mud of surrounding cliffs and named Kizil Su, or Red Waters, the upper branches of a river which, after many wanderings west and south, joins the Oxus. The summer population of Kirghiz herders was continually swollen by a population still more temporary —caravans from Osh to Kashgar which stopped here for a rest in good pastures after crossing the Alai Range.

Thus Sary-tash became also the natural centre of government. The Soviet of the High Pastures was located here, a new experiment in a traveling city hall, following its populations; under it came the People's Court, the Schools for Illiterates, and the Women's Organizer. Here was located also the Medical Station, sent from the District Health Department at Osh. My first encounter in Sary-tash was with none of these, but with the Gostorg, or State

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Trading Company, direct representative of far-away Moscow.

The government trader, Abakumof, was so thin and shabbily unimportant that at first I took his big burly Russian assistant for the boss. Abakumof sat cross-legged on the floor of his yurt while a comely Kirghiz woman made us tea. "I'm a natural born Kirghiz myself," he grinned, "though I come from north Russia! I know all the Eastern ways — Chinese, Dzungars, Afghans, Tadjiks, and Kirghiz. I can talk with them all more or less." With a grin he explained his two weeks' growth of beard, which added to the unkemptness of his appearance. "I'll shave once for all when I get back to Osh," he said. "Here we are out of the world."

Clearly Abakumof was no gentleman traveler, dressing each night for dinner in the jungles. Yet he had his own homely self-respect, which consisted in cheerfully bragging of the risks of his job. "In 1923, the Gostorg sent the first Trading Expedition to the Alai, and it disappeared without a trace! Its goods were too well chosen; the Kirghiz wanted them — and took them! This is the first time a regular store was ever set up in the Alai. Forty thousand rubles' worth of wares, chosen to delight the taste of Kirghiz, and two hundred versts of mountains between us and the railway. I never sleep well nights," he added, ruefully.

"Not for any property or success of my own would I so venture. But this is a government affair. It

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is party policy to bring together the tribes and the cities. It is also policy to help the poor Kirghiz against the richer. Formerly a Kirghiz journeyed all the way to Osh to sell a few poods of wool clip and buy himself tea and sugar. Naturally the rich man, who had much wool and could afford the journey, exploited the poorer Kirghiz who gave him products to sell.

"All this we shall change. Now we sell goods here cheaper than you buy them in Osh. We sell cheaper than any retail store in Central Asia. For we are not a retail store; we are an arm of the Central Trading Company, bartering factory goods direct for raw materials and cutting out both buying and selling middlemen. But did you ever hear of a trader who went so far in the wilds in order to sell cheaper than the cities?" he ended with a grin.

"I am more popular than the doctor is," he bragged whimsically, later. "He has twenty or thirty people waiting at his yurt, but I have a couple of hundred." And, in fact, during my stay in Sary-tash I saw constantly a stream of Kirghiz in front of the trading yurts, weighing out wool clip, selecting iron pots, zinc-lined washing troughs, and strong, bright-colored cotton goods. Little by little I learned the history of Abakumof, and came to respect him — an outpost of government, laying foundations of a future socialist commonwealth among the wild tribes of Asia.

Abakumof never knew his father. "He was a

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mechanic in a Petersburg shipyard, an underground worker for revolution. In 1905 he disappeared into the Peter-Paul Fortress like many others, and was never heard of afterwards. My mother moved with us children back to her native village near Orel.

"All the rest of my family was killed by Denikin. I was at the front, fighting for the revolution. The forces of Denikin raided and destroyed our village. They killed twenty-three women, after first violating them. Among these were my mother, my sister, and the girl — well, I suppose you might call her my wife. What with always working underground or at the front, I was never what you call a registered family man. What could I do with personal ties? But this girl — well, she lived with me five years and she stayed with my mother when I was away. She was the nearest thing to a family I ever had.

"They were all illtreated and killed. A year later, when Denikin was driven back and we gathered the orphans into children's homes, I found my youngest sister, five years old, in a home in Kharkov. The Children's Homes were bad in those days; no food and no fuel, though we gave them the best we had. But my youngest sister lived, and now she's in a special Children's Home in Moscow for the children of martyred revolutionists.

"I myself go where the Party sends me, but mostly in Central Asia. I took the first trade shipment into Tadjikistan in 1925, nearly to Horog! There was also some risk there," he ended cheerfully.

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THE TRADER'S YURT, OUTPOST OF THE GOSTORG AMONG THE KIRGHIZ

A GROUP OF KIRGHIZ AWAITING TRIAL AT THE COURT OF SARY-TASH

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This little touch of brag was one of the means whereby Abakumof kept himself going in his lonely job amid an alien people, who so readily formed bands for plunder, swayed by a past he could not penetrate. He had also a phrase which served the same purpose — "we who make up the apparatus." He used it often, as if here in the far wilderness he wished to take hold of kinship with those who had sent him.

"We who make up the apparatus must n't have wealth of our own," he said on one occasion. "Now I had an album of the civil war covering scenes not written down elsewhere, with pictures, documents, and similar material. The Museum wanted it, and so I sent it; what can a wandering man do with an album? A pleasant thing to look at nights, perhaps; but suppose someone steals it? Then one day I hear I get a thousand rubles for my album. I hear it in this way. The Central Committee says to me, 'You are to get a thousand rubles from the Museum, of which half will be your own, and the other half you will give to Mopr (the Society for the Relief of Political Prisoners). Please sign this paper,' they said, 'giving five hundred of it to Mopr.' So I signed the paper, and I hope Mopr has now the five hundred rubles, for I have n't yet seen the half that was to come to me."

At my expressions of commiseration he laughed, saying, "Once I got also a thousand rubles in the Lottery Loan, of which four hundred is still mine in

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the bank, but the rest has gone to Mopr, the Children's Commission, and various other funds. We who make up the apparatus must support the whole apparatus."

Abakumof offered the hospitality of his yurt, but advised me to stay with the doctor. "The doctor has a very swell yurt," he said, "and here it is rather crowded." I looked around the tiny enclosure, where, amid bales of cotton goods, Abakumof slept with his Russian helper and his Kirghiz woman of all work. His other yurt was completely full of stored merchandise. I decided to seek out the doctor.

Across a little ravine and under the brow of a hill by a stream I came to two more yurts, the office and residence of the doctor. The residence was large and luxurious, the finest yurt I saw anywhere in the Alai. It was a circle some eighteen feet across, enclosed by the firmest of thick felt, which lapped close to the ground, excluding all wind. There was a more than ample hanging door of felt. Inside, the grassy floor had been covered with rugs, and in the centre of this floor an upturned packing box, covered with newspaper, was dedicated to permanent use as dining table and writing desk. Feminine touches betrayed the doctor's wife; a second box had been erected into a toilet table against one wall of the yurt, bearing tooth paste, eau de cologne, face powder, soap, and a mirror. But the fire for cooking copied the Kirghiz model, with its solid flat-topped tripod to hold big iron pots.

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The doctor had come for the summer from the hospital in Jalalabad, drawn by the higher pay and the chance to camp in the famous Alai, where he wished to investigate venereal disease among the nomads. His wife was a trained nurse and midwife, also drawing government pay. His household was completed by a baby son and a Kirghiz servant, who spoke Russian, chopped wood, made fires, brewed tea, and helped in the office with the patients. The doctor's wife did not welcome me with quite the same interest shown by the Gostorg representative; she was generally much less interested in the changing life of the Alai. But she took it for granted that I had come to stay with her, and showed me a place on the rug to put my baggage. She also made it plain, after the first hospitable meal of potato soup, that henceforth I should have to forage for my own food, which was scarce in the Alai.

Already the doctor regretted the impulse which had made him volunteer for the Alai. He claimed to have found much less syphilis than he had expected. "One understands that the nomad races are rotten with it, and I expected a field for study, but here in the Alai not more than two to four per cent have it, judging by my patients, which is a low record for any locality or nation." He was already talking of returning to Jalalabad, though he had been only three weeks in the Alai and had brought supplies for a much longer time. He said in justification that he found little sickness of any kind in the valley.

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At least a hundred patients had been gathered about the yurt on the day of my arrival, but the doctor said these were not ill, but had come chiefly for vaccination, since a couple of cases of smallpox occurring in one of the encampments had scared everyone. This fact speaks volumes for the effect of medical propaganda among the Kirghiz, for it is only a few years since the news of Western medicine first reached them. Another doctor of my acquaintance went in 1922 on the first Health Expedition among the Kirghiz, and was surrounded at every halt by a mob of excited patients who demanded, "What is the word you use? Tell us before you go, that we also may use it when you are here no longer." To the Kirghiz of a few years ago, medicine was simple magic, a charmed word being its most important ingredient. Perhaps it was still magic to the hundred patients who came for vaccination against smallpox, but at least they had learned where to come. All social workers testify that schools and work for women advance slowly among the Kirghiz, but that the medical stations of the Health Department, introduced only since the revolution, are most popular.

A different reason for the wish to depart was given me by the doctor's wife, who told me frankly that they were afraid of bandits. "We hear the band of Jina Bek has come over the border from China. Not long since they raided some villages east of Gulcha. At present they are known to be about

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fifty kilometres away in the hills. And what is fifty kilometres to men like those but one dark night's ride through the passes?"

She added that it was the custom of the *basmachi,* or "guerrilla bands," to travel by night, especially on dark rainy nights, and to fall on sleepers when dawn made evident the location of yurts. For the next two nights she felt reasonably secure, because of the presence of five armed men of the G.P.U. who were camping temporarily in a yurt of the Pasture Soviet. But they would soon move on to a yurt two kilometres away, and our site would be defenseless. Even a band of forty-five men, she said, would not bother to come against five armed soldiers of the G.P.U., for the bands had few arms and a very scanty supply of ammunition, and preferred raids on peasants and herders whom they could terrify without wasting shot. For the next week or two she thought the site of Sary-tash would be reasonably safe, during the exchange of troops along the trails to the Pamirs; after that, she and her husband had decided to leave.

They left, temporarily, even sooner. On the second night, when the five armed men of the G.P.U. moved camp to a yurt farther up the valley, the doctor's family accepted an invitation to join these soldier police in an evening feast of a slaughtered sheep. The doctor's wife told me frankly, as she left, that they would not return till morning, as they thought it safer to pass the night in the yurt of the G.P.U.

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She made no apologies about leaving me alone with her Kirghiz manservant, to receive any bands that might come in her absence. The night was the type she described as "typical" — the only rainy night I spent in the Alai. But no bands came.

A traveling representative of the Gostorg, who had lived in the same district as Jina Bek and known him personally, told me how Jina Bek had come to be bandit. Under the Tsar he had been a wealthy Kirghiz, and he had survived as village potentate even under the first days of the Soviets. He had "five thousand horses, eight wives, and uncounted sheep," according to the tax collector. Clearly a real "prince" of the Kirghiz, yet he had none the less managed to send his son to the university in Tashkent when the Soviet Power opened that institution to native races and before the ban against sons of the wealthy became enforced.

During the first years of soviet rule, Jina Bek evaded the tax collector and all regulations by the ancient ways of the East — bribery and local terrorism. But steadily the local governments became better organized, and at last a tax collector of determination called on Jina Bek and presented a bill. It was a very large bill, covering many arrears of super-taxes. That night Jina Bek packed his wives and movable property on sixty camels, and by dawn was over the hills towards China. He is seventy years old, living vengefully in Kashgar, and financing the band of raiders which his son leads.

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The doctor, who relied for his safety on the G.P.U., was ready enough to evade them if he saw his own advantage by it. He was negotiating with a Kirghiz from another encampment to take him and his possessions back to the railroad when the camp should close. This Kirghiz had many horses and did a business of transport; he was clearly one of the wealthy Kirghiz against whom the Soviet Power discriminates. They bargained long; the Kirghiz demanded a high price in rubles, but agreed to take the doctor's family and goods for practically nothing if the doctor would sell him a rifle. The Kirghiz was a *lishenetz,* a man deprived of vote on account of his wealth and occupation as trader; he was denied the right to possess arms. But the doctor had easily secured both a rifle and hunting weapons, besides his revolver; he got the needed permit in view of his profession and because he had volunteered for work in a wild region.

The Kirghiz wanted the rifle and the couple hundred rounds of ammunition that went with it. He offered far more than the doctor had paid. In addition, he would make great concessions in the transport of people and goods to the railway. To such as he, rifles were worth their weight in gold; quite possibly he would sell them for even more to the bandits, with whom such disaffected traders are often in alliance. I could not help wondering how soon the doctor's weapon would fall into the hands of the very band he fled from. The doctor decided

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to sell. Next day again he wavered. It might come, he said, to the knowledge of the G.P.U., and cause him unpleasantness. He decided to refuse. What his final decision was after I left I have no means of knowing.

Not more than a couple of hundred yards away from the doctor's yurt, and over a slight hillock, were three shabby yurts occupied by members of the Pasture Soviet. In one of them I learned that a People's Court was in progress. The dogs barked furiously at my approach, but were quieted by their masters and soon learned to know me, a recognition never accorded me by the dog at the Gostorg, who bit me twice and always sounded a mad alarm when I came near.

Outside the People's Court, on the grass in the sun, sat the culprits and complainants in various cases, awaiting the summons to enter the yurt. The first case called for trial was that of an under-age marriage, combined with the payment of *kalym,* or "bride purchase," which is now forbidden. Such new laws run counter to ancient customs and are hard to enforce. This marriage had taken place some months before in a distant village, remote from law courts. Now that the villagers had moved up to the high pastures, someone had reported the case to the Pasture Soviet. Was it a zealous village Communist? Or a personal enemy? Or a man who combined both parts in one person? The complainant was not present, and may have been unknown.

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Inside the yurt two threadbare rugs covered the ground, and on one of these at the side opposite the door squatted the judge, a Kirghiz in a corduroy blouse, high boots, and a fuzzy skin cap which was pushed down over his head so that the edges expanded and made a sort of fur halo. There was no table. Close to the judge rested a sheaf of papers wrapped in a large red kerchief; the clerk of the court lay flat on his stomach for better ease in writing, placing both paper and ink on the ground. To the right of the judge sat two women, swarthy, with shawls on their heads. They were the "People's Co-Sitters," chosen according to law from the local population to sit with the judge in a limited number of cases and supply the point of view of the "local conscience." They had equal rights with the judge; all decisions must be unanimous.

The fathers of the young bride and groom first entered; the first was a hard-looking man with round, beefy face, who looked easily guilty of worse crimes than selling a bride in the ancient manner. Shy, but naïvely self-important, next entered the bridegroom, a boy of some fifteen years in long black coat and black velvet hat, the edges of which were thickly trimmed with a circle of astrakhan fur. Then came the bride's mother, ushering in the bride herself, a girl clearly older than the boy.

The girl timidly draws a vivid orange shawl across her face. She kneels before the squatting judge, not in any gesture of obeisance, but because kneeling

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is the easiest form of temporary repose in a yurt, and squatting is a more permanent form. The boy, who is already kneeling, edges towards her with a gesture of protection and possession. The only change from this posture is made when they stand to answer the questions of the judge.

The boy claims to be eighteen years old; he is asked how he knows and he replies that someone told him. His parents? asks the judge. The boy denies that his parents have told him anything. He is confused; he does not want to incriminate his parents, so he sticks to the statement that he is eighteen. The doctor testifies that the boy is only fifteen and not yet sexually mature. Both boys and girls develop late among the Kirghiz of the hills, much later than among the prematurely developing folk of the Central Asian valleys.

The bride stands up. She has been dressed in all her best clothes for this serious occasion: a long sleazy cotton gown of brilliant rose-magenta color, covered with a black velveteen cloak and a large orange shawl embroidered in many more colors. These clothes make her a formless figure of comedy rather than tragedy. Seen from the rear, she might be any age up to fifty, but her face is unformed, youthful, and bewildered. She claims to be nineteen years old. How do you know? asks the judge. The doctor testifies that she is about sixteen, also immature up to the time of her marriage, but at present no longer a virgin.

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"With whom have you had relations?" asks the judge. She answers, "With my husband." Except for these brief answers she says no word, nor does any emotion cross her face. The boy edges a little nearer to her, but makes no other movement.

It is claimed that three hundred rubles, thirty sheep, and two good horses were paid for this young girl. Girls come high among the Kirghiz, for they are much fewer than boys, and are much needed. They do all the work of the household. They make the yurt, first rolling the heavy felt and then decorating it. They milk the cows, the ewes, the yaks, and make the various forms of sour milk and cheese used in Kirghiz diet; they make the receptacles for liquids, by cleaning and boiling sheep's entrails. Laboring hard, and bearing children without medical care, the mortality is high among them. Therefore a healthy girl of good family is worth many sheep.

The payment of kalym seems probable, but is not proven. Sheep, indeed, are shown to have changed hands, but who shall say for what payment? Both defendants deny any sale or purchase of the girl. The under-age marriage is, however, very clear. The defendants move from the yurt and sit on the grass awaiting the judge's decision. He wants to give the two fathers the limit of the law — a year and a half in jail. But the two Co-Sitters are more merciful. They hold out for eight months' enforced labor, without confinement, a sentence which will disturb the Kirghiz's soul but not his household, since his

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wife does all the labor there. The judge is angry. "Illiterate, under bonds of tradition," he says to me, later, of the two Co-Sitters.

Two other cases come before the court that morning. A former village president has been superseded by his rival, who claims that the first man grafted ninety-one rubles of the "people's money." It is found "not proven." Then comes a sheep herder, suing for payment of wages. He has worked a year and a half for a wealthy Kirghiz without a wage contract. His master, the "bey," has given him occasional presents in kind and a few advances in money; now he wants settlement and the bey decides to pay him on a basis of twenty rubles a month. The laborer is dissatisfied and appeals to the court; the court sustains him and orders the bey to pay at the trade-union rate of thirty-six rubles. The bey announces that he will appeal the case. He will gain little by this except postponement, and perhaps a settlement out of court with the laborer. This illiterate herder has worked a year and a half without knowing his wage rate — mute testimony to the primitiveness of Kirghiz customs. Now into this primitive wage situation has come a modern trade-union. Henceforth the herder will no doubt be a member, and get his wage contracts on union scale.

The court adjourned and we went to the adjoining yurt, where lived the judge, his wife, and a varying number of other Kirghiz. The judge's wife was a beautiful creature; the thin green veil over her long

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black braids, and the red, green, and purple khalat which she wore, somehow only accentuated her dark charm. She was smilingly nursing her baby; but the child, on seeing his father, stopped feeding and cried to be put on a horse. He was a true Kirghiz, learning to ride before he learned to walk. The judge happily took the baby, seated him high on a horse's back, and pretended to let him ride, whereat the child crowed happily.

It was hard to tell what persons lived in the judge's yurt, for all the Kirghiz are forever visiting each other and sleep where night overtakes them. Even those persons more or less permanently residing there had few belongings and were most of the time journeying on official duties. So the population of the yurt changed too continuously for me to keep track of its occupants. I have called it the judge's yurt, not because he had more claim to it than another, but because he had a wife there and a baby, which gave his tenure an effect of continuity.

Alexeivka, the women's organizer for the valley, lived in the judge's yurt between her various trips among the scattered settlements. Like most of the organizers in the Alai, she was from Northern Kirghizia, where the Kirghiz have been longer in contact with Russians and are therefore more advanced. After the revolution she had learned to read, and had then taken a year's course in far-away Moscow to fit her for organizing and educating the backward women of her race.

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When Alexeivka learned that I was unmarried, she nodded her satisfaction. "It is good; I also shall not marry; it is better without." I asked the reason for her aversion to wedlock, and she nodded towards the judge's lovely wife, who was nursing her baby. "Because, when you marry, then those come along, and life is bad. Then you can do no work, nothing at all. . . .

"It is hard to agitate among women in the Alai," she admitted. "Not one woman in all this valley can read. They are afraid to learn anything; they run away when I come. We have three schools for illiterates in the valley, so that those who come from distant villages without schools may use the summer pastures for reading lessons. All, all were illiterates here; now a handful of boys come to the schools. They wish learning in order to rise among the Kirghiz, since now we have a government of our own. But I cannot get a single girl to come to the schools. I tell them they all need knowledge, and that they should not marry off daughters so young, and that men should have only one wife. In Northern Kirghizia now the teaching of women goes well. But the women of the Alai are very dark; they are still afraid."

Another occupant of the yurt — to whom, indeed, it belonged as much as to the judge — was Kolpaief, Secretary of the Soviet of the High Pastures. His winter job was Superintendent of Schools for the whole of Southern Kirghizia. Clearly, he was an

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exceptional man, one of the builders of the new education of his people. He had been educated in a Mohammedan school even before the revolution and had been designed by his father for a mullah, the chief post open to a Kirghiz educated man in those days. But he had still been only a boy when the World War came, followed by the Kirghiz insurrection and the revolution.

"When the war came," he said, "we refused to be the Tsar's soldiers. We killed many Russians and many of us also were killed. We fled in great droves over the borders of China, leaving our yurts and all our fixed possessions, but driving with us our cattle. I myself went with my father as far as Peking. We sold our animals and returned empty; there was neither harvest nor cattle, and many of us died. We fled in 1916 and returned in 1917 or 1918. We lost by the war perhaps 70 per cent of our cattle and 30 per cent of our people. Did any other nation lose as much as this by the World War?" The answer was clear: of all the hundred nations that suffered by the battles launched in Europe, these distant, ignorant, unparticipating tribes in the heart of Asia had suffered most. Yet the makers of war, and of peace, had never heard of them.

As Kolpaief made this clear to me, in the battered smoke-filled yurt under the Roof of the World, I began to get an idea of the man himself as a propagandist. I was next to learn his quality as a teacher. "Take your notebook and write it down," he said to

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me, as if preparing in school for a lecture, "and I shall tell you all about our people." Then he proceeded to discourse, under heads and subheads, about the economic and social history of the Kirghiz, their marriage, birth, and funeral customs, and the aims of the revolution.

"Before the war," he said, "there were many rich Kirghiz. The richest were known as beys; there were some who had two thousand horses, ten thousand sheep, and one thousand other large animals, such as cows and yaks. They lived well, in a big yurt with many quilts, and great quantities of *koshma,* the beaten felt which is used by us for rugs and yurts. Even these beys, however, went seldom to town to trade and had few foods from the city. They bought tea, sugar, and flour in the town, and ate in winter their own meat and cheese and butter; but they ate no vegetables and few fruits. They had a drink called *boza,* made of rice or millet, so strong that a man would get drunk on a single cup.

"Besides the beys were the *manaps.* They were the biggest of all, though they might have no cattle of their own. But they controlled pastures; everyone paid the manaps for the use of grass. The manaps connected themselves with the Mohammedan mullahs and the Russian rulers. The manaps of different tribes met together and decided how much taxes should be and who should pay them. A manap was 'white-boned,' noble, while the rest were 'black-boned,' common. A manap says, 'Give me that

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horse,' and he takes it. He says, 'Give me that woman,' and he takes her. He killed any man he wished and no one brought him to judgment.

"These manaps still live, but now their power is little, since the Soviet Power is against them, and they have no more the right of land. Now, since the revolution, maybe half the Kirghiz begin to settle on the land. Formerly we had only winter huts in the upper valleys, and stables for our cattle; we planted nothing, except perhaps a little fodder for the wintering of cattle. Now we begin to settle even in the lowlands, near the trading cities. We begin to plant vegetables, potatoes, onions. Many no longer take even in summer the road to the high pastures. And the land and pastures which formerly were the beys' and the manaps' are given to all the people.

"Now I will tell you," continued Kolpaief, "what we did about marriage. Under the old system, the beys married chiefly with beys, giving a very high kalym for a girl of good family. Two or three hundred sheep, fifty large cattle, a full-blooded breeding horse, and some thousands of rubles in money were not considered too much to give for a girl of a 'white-boned' family. The kalym bought not only a girl; it bought a blood-relationship with an important household. The high ones seldom took poor girls, unless these were very beautiful; and for such girls they gave less kalym, proportioned to the standing of the girl and not of the bridegroom. The poor also

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intermarried with each other and gave kalym, as much as they could afford.

"This is how it was done. The family wishing a bride for its son would give 'earnest money' in the form of a horse or perhaps twenty sheep. After this the two families became *khuda* or blood friends. Then little by little they would pay the rest of the kalym, and after that they would take the girl and give a great feast for all the young folks of the region, slaughtering many lambs and perhaps even a horse, and inviting the mullah, who read the proper parts of the Koran over the bride and groom.

"When a child was born, another big feast must be given, especially if it was a son; with a girl this was not so necessary. At these feasts they sang national music, and had great combats over slaughtered goats, and much eating and drinking. The age of marriage was with us any time from twelve to eighteen, but our young folk mature late, not before the age of sixteen; not like the Uzbeks of the valley where it is hot and they grow up quickly.

"When a man died with us, they had first the funeral and after seven days they gave a dinner, and again after forty days. After a year they gave a very big feast called the *ash,* at which many sheep and even horses were killed. After the ash the wife could marry again. But for the first year she must always sit at the side of the yurt, wailing and weeping very often and singing songs of lament, removed from life and going out seldom.

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"Now, since the revolution, this is much changed. The government decrees that brides cannot be bought, and that they cannot be married under the age of eighteen. They send women organizers to agitate for this. Already we have many women who are presidents of village soviets, and who are equal with men. Now, when a man dies, his wife can marry again on the very next day. Very seldom now does a wife lament for a whole year. This is right, for women among us are scarce, and why should she and some other man lose a year of life?

"Next I will tell you," said Kolpaief, dividing his subjects with true pedagogical method, "about our culture and our religion. Before the war our only organized culture was religion. I myself was educated to be a mullah; this was our only education. But we Kirghiz were not very religious even then. Not like the Uzbeks, the Tadjiks, the Tatars — those folk are really religious. But we Kirghiz were nomads; only half of us, even in the old days, kept the laws of Allah, that a man must pray five times daily and that old men must make pilgrimage to Mecca. Now since the revolution very few read prayers any more.

"In our former schools we learned only to read the Koran in Arabic, and to pray in Arabic, and to write a sort of mixed language, called the Mussulman language, based also on Arabic. After the revolution we began to write in the same Kirghiz language we were speaking, using twenty-four letters. Then

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there was produced the first Kirghiz grammar. Since 1925 we have gone over to the Latin alphabet, and half of our writing is now in this.

"Now, since we write our own language instead of Arabic, we begin to write our literature also. We had always a culture of our own, in our songs — epic songs, lyric songs, people's songs. But these songs were not written. Now we begin to write them down. We have authors of our own, who write poems and novels about what is happening in our lives. We have a national theatre with plays in our own language. We have a scientific committee working over the language and introducing the scientific words that we have never had from chemistry, geography, and physics. We are beginning to have science books in our language — biology, astronomy, chemistry, physics. I myself have translated books from the Russian.

"Our young folks are learning everywhere, in Leningrad, Moscow, and Tashkent. They study medicine and pedagogy, and return to organize our health and education. Formerly there was not a single school in our language; a Kirghiz could study only in Arabic to be a mullah, or in Russian to be interpreter for traders. Now, even in the far a-ools the schools spring up."

Kolpaief's duties in the Soviet of the High Pasture were to agitate and educate Kirghiz for self-government in their winter villages. The winter a-ools are many, and hard to reach in the snow; but

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the summer pasture is spacious and easy of access, and here were gathered the people of scores of villages. "We are organizing some collective-farming groups among the Alai nomads," he said. "We are starting a state farm, concerned chiefly with livestock, to bring into the valley breeding stock for the improvement of the herds. Naturally those who form collectives get the first use of the pure-bred animals. Later these groups will continue their work in the winter quarters, and will begin to organize methods of settled farm life. I spend the summer traveling in the high pastures, organizing these groups and making speeches on the new ways of farming, on taxes, on new laws and crimes, on labor regulation, on the international situation."

In some amazement I asked what his audience could understand of the international situation. "Certainly they know nothing of the boundaries of America," he answered, "and little of Europe, for they have never seen a map or a book of geography. But they know very well the boundaries of Asia, for they travel across them. They know the peoples of Asia. They can understand very well the struggle for power in Asia — the questions between Tadjiks and Afghans, between Britain and Russia. About these matters they themselves make very good speeches."

Such was the propaganda carried on in the Vale of Alai, under the Roof of the World and not very far

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from India. Such were the people who made of Sary-tash an outpost. The unkempt, devoted revolutionist of the Gostorg, driving direct exchange of goods to the yurts of the nomads; the restless, dissatisfied doctor, from whom they had all learned vaccination; the Pasture Soviet, with its court, its schools, its women's organizer, its able and energetic secretary, making speeches on ancient Kirghiz culture and the struggle for power in Asia.

The methods of living of Kolpaief were still those of a nomad. I dined with some frequency in the judge's yurt, with whatever Kirghiz chanced to be present. I remember one typical meal and the labors it gave to the housewife — who was not, incidentally, the judge's fair bride, but a hired woman. A big iron pot was placed on the central tripod and the fire kindled under it began merrily sending its smoke in our eyes and finally out through the roof. As soon as the water was boiling, large chunks of lamb were thrown in. After an hour or so, during which the guests talked around the fire or went about their business, the chunks of lamb were taken out and passed around in a big bowl. Each guest took a bone in his fingers and tore at the meat with his teeth. Such was the first course of the meal.

Meantime the housewife was busily rolling a dough made of flour, water, salt, and a little sour milk. This dough marked the household off from the old style nomad — they had flour. The kneading board was placed on the ground and the woman knelt over

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it, pushing a heavy roller back and forth. When the dough was very thin, she lifted the sheet at one end and rolled it lightly to a cylinder, cutting this crosswise into many thin strips. Thus she produced noodles. She cooked these in the broth from which we had taken the meat, and served us soup, full of a pasty mess of noodles. This was the second course of the meal.

The housewife's labors were not yet ended. Emptying the iron pot of all soup, she placed in it the fat that had been cut from the lamb and rendered it, filling the yurt with stifling smoke. Under the veil of this smoke she still worked at her kneading board, preparing a thicker dough to be fried into round buns. These are the lepeshka of the nomads, a heavy fried bun made after the meat and soup courses, and differing from the lepeshka of the cities, which are oven-baked.

Meantime Kolpaief carefully washed the grease of the lamb from his fingers and brought out a long stringed instrument which he handled with care. Talking stopped in the yurt; the guests leaned back, replete and content. Kolpaief, the agitator, the Superintendent of Schools for Southern Kirghizia, began to play old Kirghiz melodies, plaintive, monotonous, the heritage of the people who for ages and ages have kept sheep and held feasts in these hills.

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VIII

THE TROOPS IN THE ALAI

On the afternoon of July 2, I suddenly saw a white tent newly erected about two miles away among the yurts of Sary-tash. Rumor, which always travels faster than a horse in the mountains, came that Lavroff had arrived. I hardly credited the rumor, for at Sufi-Kurgan the last courier had told us that the troops had not yet left Osh; and certainly I expected more than one tent when they should appear. Yet Lavroff had said he would pass Sary-tash on the third; it was necessary to investigate.

To move even a short distance on foot in the Alai was proving unexpectedly exhausting. Yet the elevation was only 10,000 feet, a height at which I have never before felt uncomfortable. I can only surmise that the continued stay at this elevation sapped my energy; or else that my strength was taken by the heavy cold I had caught in the rains of Gulcha and which had turned into a feverish bronchitis in the Alai. This, complicated by digestive troubles caused by an exclusive diet of meat and soggy lepeshka, had forced me to spend one entire day in bed on the floor of the doctor's yurt; and the rest of the time I moved short distances without much enthusiasm. To walk

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the two miles to the white tent was so exhausting that I began to wonder whether I could go on to the higher elevation of the Pamirs.

It was indeed Lavroff, who had come ahead of the main force of troops, bringing a party of only ten persons. He planned to push on rapidly to the Pamir Post on the Murghab, the "capital" of the Eastern Pamirs, and then go on, even more rapidly, for a brief visit to the post in the far southeast, where the Afghan, Chinese, and Russian frontiers come together. After this visit of inspection, made necessary by his new position as commander of the entire Pamir region, he would return to the Murghab in time to meet the main body of troops, who would be traveling more slowly. They would then all proceed together to Horog, the central post in the Western Pamirs, which, by reason of its much lower elevation and consequent vegetation, was his permanent headquarters. He expected to leave Sary-tash either late on the third or early on the fourth, and asked if I could be ready.

Certainly I was ready, if I could find my horse. On the day of my arrival, Abakumof, the government trader, had casually taken charge of him. I had told Abakumof that Alai had a "bad character," that he had thrown me once and kicked me twice, and had a tendency to seek the freedom of the hills like a true nomad, but that I was quite willing to pay for someone to watch and feed him. Abakumof had replied that the horse would be all right grazing with the

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rest of the Gostorg horses, and that whenever I wanted him I could get him in half an hour.

Twice during the few days in the Alai I had spoken of my horse to Abakumof, saying that I should like to have him to visit the Schools for Illiterates which were somewhat too far to reach by walking. The first time he replied that the Gostorg men were busy loading a caravan for Osh and could not be spared to get Alai; the second time he said frankly that Alai had wandered away somewhere, but would doubtless return. "Don't worry; he can't get out of the valley, and they always turn up." He was so unwilling to send a man, and his Russian helper was clearly so busy, that I had not insisted on a special trip to locate a horse before I really needed him.

Now that I wished to leave, I went at once to Abakumof to demand my horse. He was full of promises, but again delayed. On the morning of the third, he assured me that there was no great hurry, as Lavroff had that very morning told him that he would leave on the fourth. Before night my horse should be ready. I was far too tired to walk two miles merely for exact information from Lavroff of his time for leaving, so I chose to believe Abakumof. Suddenly, at noon, a Kirghiz came to me in some excitement, and pointed out a group of men riding away across the valley towards Bordoba under the Trans-Alai range. The white tent was gone; it was clear that Lavroff was gone also. I was left behind in the Alai.

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At once I went in anger to Abakumof, demanding my horse forthwith. There was still time, with a Kirghiz guide, to make Bordoba by evening, though a stormcloud lowering from the Trans-Alai range was not reassuring. Abakumof did not seem greatly concerned, but his formula changed. Instead of saying that the horse would appear immediately, he remarked consolingly that horses often disappeared for several days. Perhaps the horse had gone back to Osh to its original owner. Or if the owner was a Kashgarlik (and the horse was Kashgar-bred), perhaps he had gone to Kashgar! I began to have dark thoughts about Abakumof, and wondered if he had used my horse in his caravan to Osh.

Late in the afternoon, lifting my eyes by chance towards the direction where Lavroff's tent had been, I saw again a white tent among the yurts. Had Lavroff come back? Or had the horsemen riding away to Bordoba been a different party? Then a second tent arose, and a third, and fourth and fifth. These must be, I knew, the main body of troops that were following Lavroff. Had they, I wondered, been given any instructions regarding my presence? Were they prepared to take me with them? In that case, it was more than ever necessary to find my horse.

That evening a Kirghiz reported that he had seen my horse on a mountain side sixteen kilometres away with a mare that had strayed from his own encampment and which he had been seeking. He had recognized Alai from our descriptions, but was unable

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to catch the horse, as he was alone, and dusk was coming on a hillside slippery with rain. I demanded that Abakumof send forthwith to catch the animal, and he promised to do it in the morning.

Next morning it was plain that all Abakumof's men were busy with customers around the two trading yurts, and that no one had gone for my horse. In despair I went to Kolpaief and asked advice. After a moment's thought, he suggested that I report the whole story to the representative of the G. P. U. who was camped at the moment in a near-by yurt. I hesitated to make a complaint against Abakumof, who had shown me much hospitality and who was clearly very busy; but I felt desperate.

The representative of the G. P. U. was seated on the ground outside a yurt, giving directions to one of his five men. He came into action at once; he summoned Abakumof, who came forthwith. "Did you tell this citizeness that you would look after her horse and be responsible for it?" asked the G. P. U. representative, with some sternness.

The casual smile with which Abakumof had approached us faded. Certainly he had taken my horse, and given it to his men to pasture, but as for being responsible. . . . The horse could no doubt be found. Otherwise . . .

"Find it by to-night," said the representative of the G. P. U., "or give her one of your own in exchange. We'll pick the one," he added, "and we'll see that she gets a good one."

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Abakumof sent me a black look, which I felt was deserved, for he had only taken charge of my horse out of kindness, and had since been truly busy. I had wished to hurry his actions, but not to get him into trouble. This I explained to the G. P. U. representative, adding that if my horse was lost I could not possibly make Abakumof pay for it out of his meagre salary.

"The horse is n't lost," he told me. "He'll find it. We 'll tell the Pasture Soviet to send out Kirghiz also, offering a small reward. What do you say — five rubles?" I cheerfully agreed to five rubles, and the offer was made through Kolpaief.

By early afternoon word came that the horse was returning, driven by a group of Kirghiz. Five horsemen had gone to search and four had given up, but the fifth had found him, sixteen kilometres away in the hills. He had been unable to catch him, but had secured the help of others to drive him down towards the trader's yurt.

By the time Alai had reached the yurts of the Gostorg, driven by five men and seeing in front of him twenty more intent on catching him, he was in a panic of rage and terror. Kicking and plunging, he scattered the men in all directions. The hobbles that had been placed on his legs three days before had vanished, and even the rope that had encircled his neck. There was nothing to take hold of. At last Abakumof himself plunged into the mêlée, throwing both his arms about Alai's neck, an action which cost

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him a wrenched arm and a badly bruised face. He came to me considerably aggrieved at the cost of his casual hospitality. "Take your horse," he said. "I don't want anything more to do with him." For which I hardly blamed him. I felt about the horse much as he did, but I could not get rid of it as easily.

I set off at once for the tents of the troops. It was necessary to settle, and quickly, the question whether I should journey further with them. Unless they were prepared to take some responsibility for me, it seemed too great a risk to journey further into a far wilder region where the loss of a horse might prove really serious. The representative of the G. P. U. also discouraged me. "Why do you go to the Pamirs?" he asked. "You will be lucky if you don't lose far more than a horse." I decided to find the commander of the troops and learn what instructions he had regarding me.

At the tents of the troops I was met by a pleasantly rotund woman. I recognized her at once as Comrade Nikolaieva, who had slept jointly with me in the corridor at Osh. Clearly I was known here. Her husband, she said, was in charge of the troops in the absence of Lavroff; but he had gone hunting for a few hours in the valley. Would I come in and have tea?

The large tent which I entered housed on the march twenty people — Nikolaief and his wife, the army doctor and his wife, several lesser officers and political instructors with their wives, and eight or ten

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ordinary soldiers. Except for a tiny entrance, the entire ground was carpeted with sleeping pallets which almost overlapped each other, leaving not even a glimpse of ground between. Nikolaieva told me to sit down anywhere on someone's blankets. After a time tea came, and also a thick soup with noodles. Nikolaief himself returned in the late afternoon.

Nikolaief at once informed me that he had expected me to join him in the Alai, as Lavroff had said it would probably be better for me to travel with the slower group. I might share the tent in which he and his wife slept; one of the soldiers would move out for me. All the five women of the party were in this one tent with their husbands. I might have army rations on the same basis as the families of commanding personnel, which meant at wholesale cost bought by the army.

I asked Nikolaief frankly how much responsibility he took for me. If my horse ran away again, in some place more desolate than the Alai, would he leave me behind as Lavroff had? He replied that Lavroff had left me because the larger body of troops was coming shortly, but that certainly I would not be abandoned anywhere in the wilderness. If my horse ran away again, and could not be found, they would rearrange the load on their transport horses and take me through somehow.

Most of the horses, he explained, were not army property, but belonged to peasants near Osh, and were hired through a caravan man who contracted

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to take the troops through to Horog. The soldiers journeying were infantry; the horses were a mere matter of transport. My horse would be turned over at once to the chief caravan man, and if the latter found that he remained unruly, I might ride another horse. Probably, however, since I had already found it possible to ride him, his wildness was temporary, caused by free grazing in the Alai, and would wear off in the midst of the other horses. He said he had first intended to assign my horse to his personal horseman to care for, together with the beasts that belonged to the army, but the doctor had protested against mixing a male of unknown lineage with the cavalry horses. However, his horseman would oversee the feeding of Alai, as otherwise the caravan man might discriminate in favor of his own horses.

Nikolaief, whose calm efficiency thus reassured me, and who proved throughout my journey very kindly and helpful, was not a military commander at all in the technical sense of the word. He was the "political commissar," in charge of all recreational and educational activities. To attain this post he studied several years in a Military-Political School where all his expenses were paid by the army; in return for this education he was expected to give certain years of service. Under him were several political instructors, in charge of club work, classes, and various forms of educational training; they had studied in the same school for a shorter term, and were bound to shorter periods of service. At the close of their required

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term they might retire to civilian life if they chose, or the army might refuse to reëngage them. But usually they chose, if found acceptable, to return to the school for a further period of study, and thus rise to higher posts in the army's political work. Thus the corps of political instructors was constantly refreshed by new studies, while the students of the Military Political School were constantly testing their knowledge and fitness by periods of practical work after each period of study.

In any stationary post the political teaching of the army occupied at least two hours daily of regular class work, besides the many recreational and voluntary social activities which have also a political basis. The political training of the Red army is considered fully as important as their military training; they are expected to rely as much on propaganda as on guns. Even during the long trek to the Pamirs, when daily classes were clearly impossible, the political leaders held small evening conferences with any groups of men who were interested. Two topics rose most often in these discussions: Afghan politics, which affected the frontier to which they were going; and the Five-Year Plan for national development, which was stirring all Russia. Of all such work Nikolaief was in general charge; in addition to this, Commander Lavroff had placed him in command of the Pamir journey as far as the Pamir Post.

Since it was now clearly decided that I should continue with the troops to the Pamirs, and since Niko-

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laief told me there were no extra sheepskins among his stores, it became necessary for me to search for one at once among the Kirghiz. Even in my short sallies from the doctor's yurt in the Vale of Alai I suffered from cold if the sky was overcast or if night had fallen; in the higher elevations beyond, sheltered only by a tent, heavy furs would be needed.

Alexeivka, the woman's organizer, agreed to seek with me among the a-ools for a sheepskin. Each of these clusters of three or four yurts, she told me, was composed of a group of relatives, usually under one "old man," the progenitor of the group. The married sons and their families occupied the additional yurts in the a-ool. Polygamy, she said, was still very prevalent, and often there would be an old wife and a young one in the same yurt. New yurts are not necessarily provided for more extra wives; only when the wife's offspring grow up and acquire economic weight in the household do they have separate yurts.

We visited five or six a-ools in vain — a tedious task, for though these yurts were all in sight of each other, they were separated by as much as half a kilometre from the nearest neighbor, to preserve grazing space. We came at last to an unusually clean-looking abode, where, it seemed, they had an extra sheepskin which they might sell. As we entered the main yurt, it filled at once with interested women; the men did not make an appearance. One woman was spinning from a lump of raw cotton which she held in one hand; with the other hand she twirled it into thread

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on a long stick. It was the "distaff" which the modern world hears of only in fairy tales; it antedates the spinning wheel. This woman wore in her ears great hoops of metal several inches in diameter, decorated with many bangles.

After much pleasant bargaining we bought the sheepskin for twenty-five rubles. It was in form a gigantic coat, made completely of rough skins, without collar or cloth lining or buttons. Its sleeves extended below the tips of my fingers; its skirt all but touched the ground when I stood. It flapped across the chest with nearly ten inches extra. It was intended to be worn with the skin outwards and the fleece inwards. In such a coat one might ride through a blizzard or sleep on frozen earth; but one would not walk far in it.

During the day the army doctor visited the yurt of the local doctor and exchanged much gossip about jobs and wages. He offered my host a position in Horog at 200 rubles a month for himself, 150 rubles a month for his wife, and the right to buy food at the army canteen, where products are sold at wholesale rates and without charge for the heavy cost of a month's horse transport to that distant post. My host refused the offer with a touch of contempt, saying that he had once previously worked with the troops, and had received 300 rubles for himself and 160 for his wife.

"Ah, if it's high wages you want," countered the army doctor, "then you should take a civilian post

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with the new Department of Health of Tadjikistan. There you can get as high as 500 rubles a month for yourself and a good job for your wife also. But lonesome, comfortless work, and not without danger. Carrying medical help to Tadjiks who have never seen Western medicine. Now the government is putting in medical stations and even hospitals everywhere. They are advertising for doctors in all the Russian newspapers. But you would be buried alive in those distant villages — not even the cheer of an army post. Besides, in the recent civil war in Afghanistan, a group of raiders crossed the frontier and massacred a Russian doctor and his wife."

My host admitted that he was "out for high wages." His ambition was to save 5000 rubles and have a little capital to do something with. He took down the address to which application should be sent for a job among the Tadjiks. The two doctors spent the rest of the evening playing cards; I taught them the game of bridge, which they thought "a pleasant, simple game." When I asked the army doctor if we should play it on our future evenings in the army tent, he answered : "This is the last time. Among the soldiers such things are not done." A Spartan régime, truly, is devised for the Red army.

During the afternoon there arrived the Economic Expedition from the University of Central Asia — a group of ten or twelve students, graduates, and professors, who were studying economic life among the Kirghiz. They had been collecting data in many of

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the winter villages as they came from Gulcha, and now intended to spend a fortnight with the Alai nomads. They were studying Kirghiz life under three heads : the completely nomad, the half-nomad, and the settled farming Kirghiz. Their data would be given to the new Kirghiz Republic, as a basis for land laws, pasture laws, and educational plans.

At six o'clock on the morning of July 6, a soldier came from the army camp to the doctor's yurt, bringing my horse, which he tied to the side of the yurt —then went away. I packed my baggage and sat on the grass watching Alai; he had run away so often that I feared even at the last minute he would manage to escape. Alai stared back at me, and munched the grass. An hour and a half later came Nikolaief's horseman, who saddled my beast and put on my baggage and helped me mount, saying that we must hasten, as the troops were already crossing the valley. The doctor and his wife were not yet up, and I could not ask the servant to make tea while they were sleeping, so I left on my trip without tea or breakfast. At the last moment they came to the door to say farewell.

In the distance the troops were moving—a long line led by handsome horses, followed by the heavily laden beasts of the infantry transport, and ending with baggage animals. We must move across the plain without a trail in a swift diagonal to overtake them. Alai showed his usual stubborn unwillingness to move, so the horseman took his reins and trotted ahead, tugging him. As we came to the rear of the

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caravan the soldiers began to guy him, calling him "nursemaid." But once among the horses of a caravan Alai's gait improved. He began even, under some whipping, to pass the other horses and come up towards the front. Clearly he was accustomed to caravan life; one could even judge from his manner what his past existence had been. He kicked and struggled resentfully when loaded only with baggage; but when carrying a heavy weight of baggage and a rider, he loped along comfortably in unison with other horses, and showed some pleasure at being ordered to move ahead of the rest. Obviously, he had passed his life as the riding animal of a caravan master.

The morning was glorious, neither too hot nor too cold — rare weather indeed for the Alai and not to be long continued. The sun was warm, but there was a light wind. Our column of some hundred and fifty horses stretched behind me for more than a kilometre across the plain. I had come up almost with Nikolaief, who rode on a fine charger with a cavalry saddle; near him were two aides whom he might send on errands. He carried no baggage, and the aides carried only small saddlebags and a blanket roll. The doctor and one or two other officers were similarly mounted, riding as horsemen should ride on a long journey.

All the rest of our cavalcade rode on mountains of baggage. They were not cavalry, but ordinary infantry, who because of the high altitude of the

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Pamirs were sent to their posts on horses — ordinary native horses rented from a caravan man. None of these horses had either saddles or stirrups, which would only have added additional weight to their burdens. They were first piled high with freight, bags of oats, rice, barley, potatoes, together with the soldiers' personal baggage for the coming year. On a hundred pounds of such freight perched the riders.

They were cheerful peasant boys, coming from all parts of Russia — recruits of the regular army going for a year's service at the frontier posts. Quite different from the cool, aloof, efficient police of the G. P. U. Here were no hard-riding horsemen, speeding with professional swiftness on the trail of smugglers. From time to time they fell from their insecure seats of badly balanced baggage on horses of uncertain dispositions. They landed with youthful agility, and the other boys laughed at them. They kept up with each other a cheerful banter.

Nikolaieva herself was no better mounted; the pay of a political commissar gave no surplus for taking a wife through the Pamirs in luxurious style. She also rode high in air on sacks of barley and a roll of bedding. She had no stirrups, but her seat was so soft and wide that she did not need them; she dangled her feet against the horse's neck as from a chair. It was quite comfortable, she declared, but it had one drawback — at occasional stops her horse had a habit of suddenly kneeling, and then Nikolaieva

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would slide off with her roll of bedding. This also did not hurt her, for she was roundly padded with sheepskins, and she rolled quite comfortably to her feet on each occasion. When the caravan was ready to start again, her husband would leave his splendid charger, which was supplied by the army for his rôle as political commissar, and would lift her bodily back to position. It was impossible not to think of the officers' wives of India, only a few hundred miles to the south across a border. How any of them would have scorned the mount of Nikolaieva! In Russia a woman's position is fixed by her own job, not by that of her husband's. If Nikolaieva had been herself a commander (and there are women in such posts), she would have had a charger. As it was, her official status was that of "housewife"; she was in no way thought of as connected with the army—she was "in private life," like any housewife.

From time to time the soldiers behind me broke into a marching song; their sonorous voices rolled across the Alai, echoing in the wilderness of grass and mountain. We rose and fell over the uneven floor of the valley; sometimes our line wound behind me into the distance, sometimes we paused to allow the baggage train to overtake us. Steadily the great snow range drew nearer. My horse moved easily on, near the head of the procession, as if upborne by the long caravan coming behind him. I rejoiced that Lavroff had left me in the Alai; surely, to ride with the ordinary troops, singing as they went, was more

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sociable than to have hastened ahead with a handful of fast-riding men to Murghabi.

Then suddenly occurred my second fall from Alai, the turning point in my trip, far more disastrous than the first fall in the soft mud of a swamp. Unlike Nikolaieva and the young soldiers, I fell not lightly, but was thrown heavily by a horse running away.

As the sun went under a cloud we stopped for a moment, and I asked a soldier to untie my saddlebags and get out a sweater. In tying them up again he failed to fasten securely the voluminous sheepskin which rode behind me, and which greatly added to the bulk of my baggage. A short time later, as I rode ahead, three abreast with Nikolaief and the doctor, the sheepskin pulled loose and began flapping. I myself did not notice it; only later did I learn what it was that frightened Alai. I was conscious only that he began to go faster, and for a moment I rejoiced, thinking that my stubborn beast went as well as Nikolaief's charger. Then, as the increased speed failed to dislodge the flapping sheepskin that troubled the beast, he raced faster and faster, in an increasing ecstasy of rage and terror. He wheeled across the front of the column and started back through the advancing horses, but so swift and irregular was his passage that none of the insecurely mounted soldiers could stop him. He hurled himself from side to side; I was quite aware that I was unable to hold him. If I had known, even at this moment, what bothered the horse, I might have held the sheep-

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skin firm and so calmed him. But suddenly I knew I was slipping and pulled my feet free of the stirrups. The next moment the doctor was bending over me and I was trying to rise from the ground.

It was impossible to rise; again and again I tried, but the pain in my hip was intense and I was trembling so that I could not stand. The doctor looked concerned and made a brief examination, announcing that no bones were broken, but that I had suffered both external and internal bruising about the hip and back, and to a less extent on the shoulders and knees. In addition I had had a nervous shock, but the effect of this would soon pass. One of Nikolaief's aides had meantime caught Alai, and it was announced that he should change horses with me.

Almost at once I was lifted into place on my new horse, which was taken in tow by a soldier, so that my sole attention might be given to holding myself in place. The doctor gave me some smelling salts to use as a preventive against faintness. For some time we thus proceeded, but the dizziness did not pass — it rather increased. At last the aide called the doctor and said that I seemed in constant danger of fainting from the horse; the women also gathered about and gave me the cheering news that I had aged ten years since morning. The doctor decided that he had underestimated my injuries, and ordered a half-hour halt of the entire column. I was lifted from the horse to a sheepskin laid on the ground, and at once lost consciousness. Half an hour later I was

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aroused and told that we must go on. The caravan men were complaining that the horses were standing laden and exhausting themselves without progress.

During the half-hour wait a small, quiet Uzbek pony had been equipped with the saddle to which I was accustomed, and I was lifted into this seat. At first it seemed that the rest had increased my faintness, but this rapidly passed and I found it possible to continue. Four hours more we rode through increasingly gorgeous scenery, of which I remember sharp glimpses caught through a veil of pain. I was too faint to notice when we passed Bordoba, a ruined, roofless stable destroyed by the civil war. But about four o'clock I learned that we had left the Vale of Alai and were now in a tributary ravine leading up to Kizil-art, or "Red Passage."

Nikolaief wished to go further and camp higher in the pass, in order to leave less journey for the morrow. We had come only thirty or thirty-five kilometres from Sary-tash, while considerably more than fifty still separated us from Lake Kara-Kul, which we must make on the following evening since it was the first pasture beyond Kizil-art. The caravan men, however, had rumors that the higher fodder was covered by recent snows, and insisted on camping at once where we were sure of grass. We left the trail, crossed a rocky river bed through which ran many little streams, and camped on grassy slopes of the far side under the lea of hills.

That evening a discussion took place between

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Nikolaief, the doctor, and myself, regarding the possibility of my proceeding further. The doctor said I ought to rest completely for several days, which was clearly impossible. The following day he expected my general condition to improve, but the pain in my hip would be greater. If I kept moving it would take longer to heal, and might get definitely worse. On the other hand, there was nothing serious the matter, no bones broken, no sprains, but merely heavy contusions which had broken large numbers of blood vessels. Some of these, he said, were visible at the surface, in the wide black mark which ran from front to back around my right hip; other contusions were probably not visible, but were causing the pain when I moved. However, even if I rode to Pamir Post I could count on getting over the fall, though it would take longer.

Nikolaief then offered, if I wished, to send me with an escort of three soldiers back to the Alai. This would be only one day's trip. If I chose to go ahead there would be five days of length definitely fixed by the presence or absence of grass. The following day would be more than fifty kilometres — probably fifty-eight. If I chose to go ahead, he would give me two or three soldiers to put me on the horse and lead the animal, and I would be permitted to drop behind for short rests if I needed them, though I must reach camp by sundown. What did I choose? Did I wish to go on or go back?

I considered to what I might return in the Alai:

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to a doctor who had made it clear that hospitality was wearing thin; to Abakumof, from whom I had parted in a quarrel over my horse; to Kolpaief and the Pasture Soviet, who planned to move camp in a few days. Nowhere in the Alai was any permanent rest. The best I could hope for would be a chance to ride with some caravan out to Osh, and all such caravans would be traveling faster than the troops. There would be, in addition, the depression of being forced to return, which might prove more exhausting than a bruised hip.

"What chances of rest shall I find at the Pamir Post if I am still sick when I arrive?" I asked.

The doctor promised a regular hospital, with attention and food and a single room. "Are there soft beds?" I demanded. He assured me that there were at the Pamir Post real beds with wire springs.

That settled it. "I will go on to the Murghab," I said. And for five days I rode, lifted every morning to my horse by the combined efforts of three men, dragged along by Red soldiers all the day, sustained by no beauty of landscape or sense of romance, but by the vision of a "real bed" with wire springs.

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IX

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

For the next five days, leaving the Vale of Alai, our route lay due south on the Roof of the World. Our first camp, beneath the high pass Kizil-art, was a mingling of beauty with extreme discomfort. Along the rocky stream bed rose slopes green and spacious, misty under light snow flurries that dissolved as they touched the earth — the remnants of a blizzard which we later learned had made life very unhappy for Lavroff's party the evening before. In vivid contrast with the green of the pastures wound the ruddy streams from the cliffs of Red Passage; beyond them towered jagged rock peaks, veined with snow and veiled with coming night.

Our tents must be set on ground already snow-soaked; the picturesque red water was utterly undrinkable; and the injury to my hip made me unable to walk. I could only hobble a few feet from one wet spot to another, sinking to rest as soon as the tents were raised. During the night I could not turn unaided even from my back to my uninjured side. When one position grew unbearably monotonous, I had to ask one of the women to help me turn. While this acute condition passed in a few days, it

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was more than two months before I was able to lie on the injured side.

None the less, on the morning of July 7, when three men lifted me into my saddle on the small easy-riding Uzbek pony, I found to my surprise that, though the act of mounting was painful, my position astride was more comfortable than either lying or standing. An occasional jolt sent a jar of pain, and I was early exhausted. But I rode with far less trouble than I had expected. As the day wore on I rejoiced that I had decided not to turn back to Sary-tash.

We left camp at 7.20 on the morning of July 7, with a long day's trek ahead of us, through the pass of Kizil-art to Lake Kara-Kul. The little streams of the river bed which we must cross to regain our trail of the previous evening were covered with a surface of ice, through which the horses broke. As the sun grew stronger the warmth of the mountain day asserted itself. A strange phenomenon made its appearance, which all travelers in the Pamirs have noticed. Long after the rest of my body was pleasantly warm, I was puzzled by a cold sensation in one of my feet, as if it had been dipped in ice water. I found myself often glancing downward, to see if this foot had been soaked in a passing stream. At last I realized that the foot was in the shade of the horse's body and received none of the warmth which the sun gave plentifully elsewhere. From this time on we noticed the sharp difference between sun and shade;

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in the noonday sun the shade even of a horse was a relief.

For more than two hours we wound steadily upwards through scenery as gorgeous as I have ever seen. Beyond great mountains of red rock arose yet greater snow peaks. At our feet the rich moist green was cut by rushing torrents. Far down below the hill on which we rose we could see the mingling of two mountain rivers, one deep red from the clay of the lower cliffs, and the other silvery green from the high glaciers. For a long time after meeting, these waters swirled together without combining, making a changing pattern of red and silver-green.

Suddenly, in the very height of Kizil-art, where especially I awaited beauty, we passed instead into desolation. Here was no sweeping view of the higher snow peaks, but a long descent to a gray depression of sand and gravel, blighted by sun and wind. We dropped into the Valley of Death, where numberless caravans have perished. At first we found here a few thin streams of water, which flowed from the slopes we were leaving to cut the barren floor. But soon these lost themselves in the gravel and sand; the day grew parched. Though the wind was gentle and blew at our backs, the dust it raised was unpleasantly choking. We could easily imagine the tortures of a caravan caught in a windstorm in this valley. The blowing dust blinds camels, and the caravan perishes. Horses survive more successfully — shutting their eyes and guided forward by

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goggled men — but even they save themselves at the cost of much agony.

I think it was the terrible monotony of the Valley of Death rather than my injured condition that made me light-headed. Low, rocky, dusty slopes rose all about us, and through them narrow valley led to narrow valley, each like the one we had passed. By the third hour I had fantasies, finding myself in a different part of the world, or even in a different epoch, living through some adventure, facing some problem, and suddenly coming back to the Death Valley after what seemed ages. These ages could not have been more than a few moments, for always I found myself sitting securely on my horse amid endless rolling gray sands and gravel.

In early afternoon Nikolaief called a halt, and I dropped to a hillside and went to sleep at once. Half an hour later they aroused me, gave me to drink lukewarm muddy water with its flavor slightly disguised by raspberry juice, and set me on the horse again. The stop had proved refreshing. The Death Valley itself seemed to grow more interesting, opening in several places to give a view of snow peaks. Then suddenly, over one of the ridges, we looked far down on Kara-Kul.

Never in any mountains, the Alps, the Coast Range, or the Rockies, have I seen so gorgeous a lake. From the height where we rode it gleamed with a blue so vivid that it seemed a white cloth dipped in its waters must come out turquoise. In and out

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among its spacious waters, by which one may ride a day without reaching the end, wound chains of snow peaks. By some illusion, as we gazed down at the lake, the channels between these peaks seemed to rise to higher levels, floor upon lifted floor of blue amid the snows.

The raptures with which we greeted the lake gave place again to weariness. It had seemed a scant twenty minutes away, but it proved more than three hours, by a long, jolting descent that was very painful. As we drew nearer we lost sight of the waters and came into rolling sand wastes broken by isolated blades of thin grass. We alighted at last, after more than ten hours in the saddle, by a sluggish stream barely a foot in width. The camp site named for that glorious lake was parched for water, and the slow-moving muddy current was our only drink. Near it were three Kirghiz yurts, whose owners lived more from the entertainment of travelers than from the poor grass of this elevation. Nikolaïef arranged that I should sleep in one of the yurts, as it was warmer than our tents. The Kirghiz woman pulled down a pile of quilts to make a soft mattress under my sleeping bag, and this proved so enticing that, although I had eaten nothing all day, I could not wait for the soup the army was preparing, but went at once to sleep.

Kara-Kul is a camp where horses almost invariably get lost. All about its waters are hillocks of sandy gravel, sprinkled with a thin growth of poor grass.

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The horses wander far in vain search for decent nutriment, and the rolling landscape easily hides them. There is no higher hill from which a general view is obtainable, and the search for horses is slow and tiresome. I felt, however, no serious regrets when, on our first morning at Kara-Kul, the caravan men announced that sixty horses had wandered away. In spite of the horse-losing propensities of Kara-Kul landscape, sixty seemed a preposterous number, and Nikolaief suspected that the caravan men merely wanted a rest.

At Kara-Kul the altitude of 13,000 feet began to affect us. My hostess of the yurt offered hot milk with plentiful rice very badly cooked. I found it impossible to swallow more than a few mouthfuls; and there seemed no difference in taste between one thing and another. Even the first sips of tea, no matter how strong I made it, tasted only like dust. The tea was, however, useful, for its warmth in the morning started one's vital functions, usually with an unpleasant beginning of coughing and mountain sickness, after which it became possible to breathe more freely. The hard candies I had brought proved useful; their light acid taste was very reviving. Breathing was difficult; to sleep one must raise the head high for air.

By noon the caravan men declared that most of the horses were found and that we might proceed some sixteen kilometres further, where a site with better grass was to be found. Nikolaief was angry. "If

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there is good grass sixteen kilometres ahead," he cried, "why didn't they say so at once, and let us go there this morning, instead of keeping our horses half starving in this waste?" Evidently the caravan men had intended this short trip all along, but instead of trusting us with their programme had put it through with Asiatic indirectness. Six horses were still lost; an Uzbek caravan man and several soldiers were left behind to seek them and guard their loads.

For three hours we rode on wide salty flats along the shore of the lake, but had little view of it. At times the earth quaked under our feet, revealing the nearness of submerged water. At other times we forded some narrow arm of the lake, pale blue in color and bitter as quinine to the taste from the near salt marshes. We made camp near the lake, again without a view, on a low flat where even the slight digging necessary for tent poles revealed water. The grass was somewhat better than at our first lake camp, but not overabundant.

At evening one of the soldiers who had been left behind appeared, bringing two of the lost horses. He reported that three others were still missing, while one had been found dead, clearly of hunger and exhaustion. All the horses suffered from overwork and underfeeding, except the cavalry horses, which received grain from the army. The horses of the caravan men were given no food except the scant grass of these high valleys. Apparently it was more profitable to lose a few animals on the trip than to

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carry the loads of grain which would have been necessary. For Alai I bought grain from the cavalry, an unaccustomed diet which made him mettlesome.

We left our second camp near Kara-Kul on the morning of July 9. In spite of the half-day's rest, some of the animals were barely able to stagger under their loads. Three gave out completely, and the soldiers on them were forced to walk. The caravan man complained of my use of the Uzbek pony, and although my weight was no greater than that of her previous loads, I decided to change to my own horse again, but to let him be led by one of the soldiers, since I was still too ill to give attention to riding.

All day we traveled through a dead land. At last we were in truth in the High Pamir, the famous Roof of the World, to which I had looked forward with such interest. Never have I seen a landscape so utterly without charm or beauty. The snow peaks were left behind; the gleaming blue of Kara-Kul dropped beyond gray hills. We rode through such mountains as one might expect on the moon — cinders of a burned-out planet. High enough to bring exhaustion as the trail rose and fell among them; but not high enough to add any variety to the landscape. We ourselves were so high — from 13,000 feet upwards — that heights which might elsewhere have been noble peaks were mere undulations of a dreary plain. There were some variations of color between cliffs of blackish slate and hills of ruddy gray, but one was chiefly aware of endless monotony.

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In a land where the high, dry air gave a constant thirst, the absence of water was peculiarly exasperating. Signs of water were everywhere: flecks of dull snow upon some distant slope; glistening trickles on the rocks below, which must clearly unite somewhere into a stream; well-marked gullies showing green from afar, along which water must obviously run. But when we reached these gullies we found only a morass or a bed where water had been in the spring. Never have I seen a land with such promise of water so poorly fulfilled. We crossed one stream well marked on our maps; I expected from this fact to find an important river, perhaps hard to ford. We could hardly find in its drying bed pools deep enough for the horses to drink. Yet the wide channel in which it ran had clearly at some time seen torrents. Further up the valley we found an almost melted snow field, from the edges of which came the scant, dirty waters of our stream. It was named Mus-kol, or Lake of Ice.

We passed in the afternoon a Mus-kol "Station," built in Tsarist days for the service of postal couriers, who carried mail to the troops of the Pamirs. Spacious but windowless, made of the native rock, it furnished shelter for beasts and men against blizzards. Near the station was neither water nor forage, but under its very walls were skeletons of animals who had escaped from blizzards only to die, it seemed, of exhaustion or hunger. We continued for some distance up the valley and camped at last

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under the pass of Ak Baital, where we found some green, spongy slopes exuding water.

Different Red soldiers took charge of my horse in turn, willing to converse with a visitor from a strange land. They wanted tales of America and gave me stories of their own lives. A peasant son from a Russian settlement near Tashkent told of the ruthlessness of civil war as he had seen it at the age of fourteen years. "Our village was on the side of the Reds, and the Whites were always attacking and slaughtering us," he said. He had left the family homestead now, and taken a "tractor course" in the city, expecting to get work on a state-owned farm, which paid much better, he averred, than individual farming.

"Life in the army is very good now," he claimed. "Once it was bad. The Tsar sent his soldiers to the Pamirs all the way on foot. Even when you ride, the Pamirs are hard on the health. For this reason we all take special medical examinations and are given a shorter term of service. But to go to the Pamirs on foot — that indeed was very bad for a man."

Another soldier agreed that life in the army was now much better, and gave as reason that "they have all your laundry done for you now, instead of having to do it yourself." It was such simple conveniences that these peasant boys dwelt on, rather than the more revolutionary changes that have made the Red army. However, they were quite aware of these

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changes also, which had entered into their blood and showed in their every comment.

They asked, for instance, what wages American soldiers got. This is a universal question in Russia among soldiers, machinists, chauffeurs, dressmakers — all want to know what persons of their calling get in America. I replied that before the war the pay had been thirty dollars a month, and was now doubtless more, but I could not say how much. Instead of showing envy, they surprised me by saying: "Well, if our poor country had to pay as much for soldiers, there would be nothing left for industrialization and the Five-Year Plan."

They had bragged previously that soldiers in the Pamir forces get three times the usual wage, and when I asked how much this was they replied, grinning, that it was 1.65 rubles a month ordinarily and five rubles in the Pamirs. "But what do we need money for?" they challenged me, lest I, a foreigner, should think ill of their army's policy. "We are fed and clothed and shod (shoes to the Russian peasant always deserve a special significant mention), and we get free motion pictures, radio, and circus. Once we got a ration of cigarettes also, but now the anti-cigarette movement makes such headway in the army that they give us the cigarette money to spend as we like."

They wanted to know whether America had a conscript or volunteer army, and when I replied that American traditions demanded a volunteer army,

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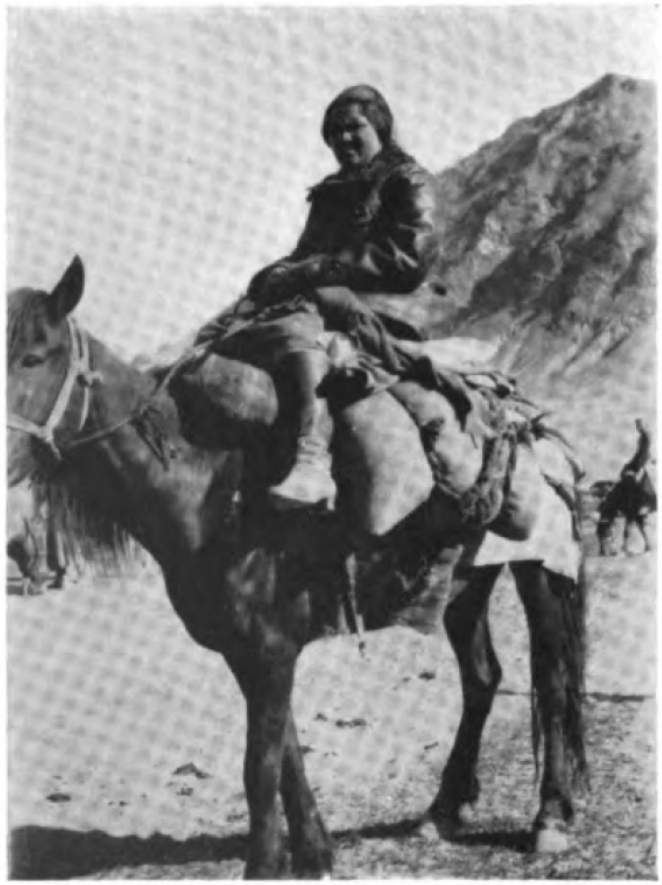

THE COMMISSAR'S WIFE, NIKOLAIEVA

KIRGHIZ FAMILY ON THE CONVENIENT YAK

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believing that no one should be compelled to be a soldier except in time of war, they were not at all impressed with the theory. "Men who choose of their own will the profession of soldier," said one of them, "cannot be your best elements. Yet you put the armed power into their hands! With us, our best elements, the workers and peasants, all learn to defend their country. Those who do not go to the two-year service learn at home in training camps. It would be very hard to beat us."

Later in the day another group of soldiers asked if I admitted that America was preparing the next world war. To my answer that, if this were true, most Americans didn't know it, they smiled with kindly contempt. "Of course not! No peoples ever know or want it. But America has most of the gold in the world, and is fighting for the markets of the world, and is building always more ships to fight for her. What is that but the next world war?" They added that it would probably be against England and Japan, and perhaps other nations as well. Such were the views received through the system of political instruction in the army, by peasant lads who a few years ago had never heard of America, except as the source of the Singer sewing machines which the village wives bought on installments, and later as the source of famine relief. Now they already shared certain definite views about world affairs and their own functions in the struggles they saw coming. For when I asked whether they would perhaps side

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with America if she fought their two ancient rivals in Asia, they replied firmly that "we could not be ally to any capitalist country," though one of them added, "It wouldn't worry us much if America smashed England."

At nine o'clock on the morning of July 10 we broke camp and began to mount towards the pass of Ak Baital, an elevation of 15,070 feet, the highest point of our journey. The horses went very slowly, for they felt the effects of the altitude. The scenery was still monotonous, but improved as the pass approached. By steady zigzags we mounted to 14,500 feet, an elevation equal to Mont Blanc or Mount Rainier. Yet this great altitude, which suffices to cover those mountains with perpetual glaciers, left the Pamirs bare and desolate hills of gravel. From this height the trail wound upward more slowly till it reached the summit of the pass, marked by a few fine peaks of black rock veined with glistening snow.

The descent was very steep, and all dismounted. I walked down with the rest, my first attempt at walking since my fall. Though I limped painfully, it was good to feel once more like a human being capable of motion, instead of a piece of baggage tied to a horse. We came rapidly down to a dreary valley at a height of some 14,000 feet, waterless, beaten by wind and sun.

On this day the sun burned more sharply than at any other time, since the elevation was higher.

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Various methods were used to protect faces and hands from the blistering of its rays. Many of the soldiers cut masks from handkerchiefs, shielding themselves partially, but developing painful red sores around the edges where the mask was lifted by the wind. The doctor and his wife wore cheesecloth bandages skillfully tied over nose and cheek and chin; since these parts project the most, they are most subject to burning. I had brought with me an Alpine cream especially made in Geneva for protection against snow burn in the Alps; I smeared my face and hands with it liberally. In addition to this I wore a Caucasian hat of white felt, with an immense flopping brim edged with fringe, which threw a wide shade on both breast and back. This is the homely means used by Caucasian mountaineers against damage to skin and eyes from the sun glare. The combination of the methods of Switzerland and the Caucasus protected me well. The Alpine cream by itself was insufficient, for my hands, smeared with cream but unshaded, burned badly. I had foolishly neglected to bring any gloves except fur mittens for cold weather. Now I was forced to cover my hands as well as I could by wrapping a large handkerchief about the hand on the reins and thrusting the other into my pocket. In spite of this, they burned painfully, but I lost no skin.

Each day after leaving the Alai the weather grew more comfortless, both with heat and with cold. So glaring was the sun that in brief halts it was a rest

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to sit on the ground in the shade of one's horse; but if one found deeper shade, such as the side of a yurt, one might shiver at noonday. The temper of my horse Alai was, however, too uncertain for me to venture near him for shade.

Slowly, interminably, the gravel floor led downwards below Ak Baital, till after many hours we came to a river and saw on its edges occasional fringes of grass among the flinty stones. The stream grew wider, boiling more fiercely in its bed as we still descended; the grassy spots grew larger. We left the stream for a time, crossing a low ridge; when we returned to its course, it was already a rushing torrent. Far ahead I saw the horses of our van plunge splashing into the waters, which rose to their bellies. Beyond the foaming river stood a massive building of native stone, and under its walls a single yurt. About this the horses scattered and the tents went up. It was the station of Ak Baital, last halt before the Pamir Post at Murghabi.

For the first time in many days there was clear cold water to drink. I limped a little way down the river, found a sheltered eddy, and took a bath, brief and shivering, but refreshing. I returned to camp with teeth chattering, but spirits high. The Kirghiz family which acted as caretaker of this station in the wilderness was ready to supply us with milk in all stages of sourness and solidity. My aneroid barometer showed 13,000 feet, which had been oppressive at Kara-Kul, but now, by contrast after

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the pass at Ak Baital, it seemed a humane height at which one could breathe again.

Next morning when the horses were gathered for their loads, Alai and the splendid mare of Nikolaief were nowhere to be seen. The rest of the beasts were loaded, and still ours were not found. Nikolaief decided that his mare, who had been in the Pamirs before, had set off alone on the road to the pastures of Murghabi, and that Alai had followed. Instead, however, of taking one of the soldiers' horses, he ordered them to set off for the Pamir Post without him, and send back horses; we prepared to wait till the next day in the Kirghiz yurt. But just as the last of the caravan disappeared over the flinty hills, Nikolaief's horseman came down an adjoining valley, driving our two beasts, who had discovered good grass and wandered off for a picnic and freedom.

The rest of the caravan had more than an hour's start, so we must make good speed. Thus I had my first experience of Alai's "wide pacing," as the Kirghiz call it. It was a pleasant variant on the monotonous slow walk which was the pace of the large caravan — a swinging stride, not quite as fast as a trot, but much smoother. The horse seems to rock forward, first with one side and then with the other, and the turning motion is not at first unpleasant. Before it became painful we had overtaken the main caravan and slowed to the usual monotonous walk.

Alai had never forgotten the fact that he had

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twice thrown me. He continuously resented the fate which fixed his pace humiliatingly at the end of a lead rope. Many times during the five days to Murghabi he tugged and twisted at the ropes, trying to break them. Twice he broke the leather straps of the reins, and once he got the bit in his teeth and smashed its iron coupling with his pull. By this last day there were no reins left to hold; I could only cling to the saddle while a soldier pulled Alai along by a quadruple rope fastened in complicated knots about his head. Once the beast nearly freed himself even from these ropes by his many jerks, and my heart missed a beat; but the soldier rearranged the knots before Alai knew how near he had been to freedom.

In the afternoon of July 11 we came in sight of Murghabi, a square towered fort above a fringe of green. As always, our goal was visible across the mountain distance for what seemed endless hours before we reached it. We dropped down dusty sun-baked slopes to a green valley — not large by comparison with lowland pastures, but a wonder valley to find in these desolate hills. In it were animals grazing — horses of the fort and the village. Slowly we wound through a small ragged settlement of clay hovels, then up a slight rise and through high gates into the solid enclosure which is known as the Pamir Post, the central fort and capital on the dreary Roof of the World.

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X

THE "CAPITAL" OF THE PAMIRS

THE Pamir Post on the Murghab River (from which it is locally called Murgavi or Murghabi to distinguish it from other posts in the Pamirs) is the centre of civil and military power in the entire region known as the Eastern or High Pamir. It is surely a strange capital. A score or more mud huts huddle close about a tiny market square, scorched by the pitiless sun and torn by the pitiless wind. Here live a Tadjik washwoman, a Chinese trader in silks, a Russian postman, and a Kirghiz district president — all alike housed in low clay hovels, since wood is not to be found in all this desolate waste.

Below the town, if a cluster of mud dwellings deserves the name, lies the source of Murghabi's existence — a half-dozen miles of grass on the shores of a turbulent river. No such grass may be found for five days in any direction; this fixes Murghabi as capital of the High Pamir. Under its rule comes a district four hundred kilometres long from the Vale of Alai to the Wakhan Tongue of the Afghans, and extending from Chinese Turkestan on the east to the valleys of the Tadjiks on the west. In all this territory is a population of only some six thousand

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souls, chiefly Kirghiz living in clusters of two or three yurts on some tiny strip of grass, perhaps forty kilometres from the next grass and the next neighbors. Murghabi, however, has enough grass for a "town," and for the transport beasts of the fort on whose trade the town depends.

Firm on the slopes above the market square sit the massive walls of the fortified post, a rectangle enclosing a few permanent buildings and a varying number of transient tents among which were now our own. Indoors there was little extra space; the commander of the post placed two small rooms at our disposal, and into these went an overflow from our tents. The doctor and his wife fell heir to two cots in the clean white dispensary, much to my annoyance, for I felt that this was the "hospital room" that had been promised me. The "soft bed with wire springs" which had drawn me five days across the Roof of the World by its promise was indeed forthcoming, but fully half its springs were unevenly mended with rope, and the rest needed gentle handling. This "civilized bed" was set up in a room with eight others, occupied by both men and women, so my longing for perfect peace was clearly postponed. Only for one day, however, for Commander Lavroff, who had preceded us, was to leave on the morrow, and the room which he vacated would be at my disposal. Then at last the doctor would have privacy and space to make a full examination of my injuries, which had not been possible on the march.

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Before leaving for Horog, whither the other troops, after two days' rest, were to follow, Commander Lavroff discussed with me my future plans. He told me that the officer of the air service with whom I had planned to return from Horog to civilization by the western route along the Oxus had decided to take his vacation in Horog, as he was suffering from an old wound. He would therefore not return to Tashkent until September; I might be left in Horog with no other alternative but to go back the desolate way I had come. He warned me also that I could not safely make the trip along the upper Pianje (which, lower down, becomes the Oxus) on such a horse as Alai. There would be wide swift rivers through which horses must swim; overhanging cliffs against which clung shaky pathways, built of jutting logs; submerged paths where a horse must feel his way carefully in the edge of the river, lest he fall from a ledge into the main torrent. A capricious beast like Alai, which shied at rocks and sheepskins, could not carry me on such trails. I must secure another horse at Horog.

"If you wish to return to Osh," contributed the post commander, "there is here a Kirghiz communist, Mamashef, the party representative in the Pamirs. He is going shortly to Samarkand to make report, and you can no doubt travel with him."

I felt that I had little more to gain by travel with the troops. The landscape through which we passed was utterly uninteresting, and eight days more of it

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lay between the Pamir Post and Horog. The Kirghiz population was sparsely scattered, and we saw only those who maintained the post stations. If I should return to Osh with an important local Kirghiz, stopping in yurts by the way, it would be more like a new trip than a retracing of my journey. I had reached the centre of the High Pamir, and seen its people and animals. Even the famous big-horned rams of Marco Polo had been visible more than once from a distance, but I was hunting for no museum that I should carry one home. There remained unvisited the valley of the upper Oxus and the Tadjik settlements, but were these worth another week of the Pamir wilderness, for the sake of landing at a mountain town called Horog, from which I could only come back again in a month to the railroad? I considered for a night and decided that I had had quite enough of the Pamirs. As a barrier between two empires they can be highly recommended, but not for an excursion of travel.

Lavroff's smaller party left the following morning. With them traveled two babies — his own sturdy son and the child of one of the other officers. They were carried in a unique contrivance. Balanced across a horse by wooden beams and ropes hung two shallow wooden boxes padded with bedding. Each of these held a baby, smiling, squirming, sometimes sleeping or crying. Above each child was raised a canopy against the sun, but since these were insufficient against the rock glare of the high altitudes, the

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babies wore bag-like masks which covered their whole heads, and smaller bags on their hands. After two weeks' jolting from Osh in this contrivance, they had emerged at the Pamir Post smiling and happy; they now went further for a week to Horog.

After Lavroff left, I decided to explore the town of Murghabi. It was only two or three hundred yards downhill to the market place. I loitered in a hut where a Chinese merchant offered to sell me "authentic chesucha"—rich golden pongee very heavy and costly, quite different from the thin commercial weaves which reach the Western lands. He had other silks, selling them sometimes to the men of the army, who wished to send home presents as souvenirs of their distant post. In another clay hut I found the Tadjik washwoman, aged and toothless, who had the day before taken my laundry; she assured me that the clothes would be done by evening. A look at her household justified the fear that they would be badly done.

A somewhat larger mud building was the office and store of the Gostorg, or State Trading Company. In contrast to its policy in the Alai, the Gostorg here had no goods to sell, but made only purchases, leaving the sale of city-made goods to the Uzbek State Trading Company, since the Pamirs were at that time part of Uzbekistan.[1] Sheepskins chiefly were piled within their dugout; but in front of a small adjacent shed stood a great heap of curling horns, from the

[1] Now part of the Tadjik Republic.

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famous long-horned rams of Marco Polo. These rare trophies, for which expeditions have journeyed around the world, are here an unregarded source of raw material, doubtless for buttons or fertilizer; they were less guarded than the sheepskins, which are stored under roof against spoil by thieves or weather. No weather would injure the horns; no thieves would steal them.

My attempts to enter the store of the Uzbektorg to buy perhaps some provisions for my return journey found only a padlocked door. Near-by loiterers told me that the manager was visiting somewhere, and that those who wished to buy should go and hunt him. They warned me, however, that it was useless, as Uzbektorg had nothing worth buying. Their stock had long since been cleaned out by eager purchasers. Later, when the manager came to open the store, I found inside only a few bolts of cotton goods and a supply of *mahorka* — an utterly inferior tobacco. Behind the counter great piles of kerosene tins, which once dispensed light to the lamps of Murghabi, were now empty. Two small pound tins of ancient "sweet biscuits," covered with dust and shop marks, were the only edibles, and though I bought one of these, I was never hungry enough to find it appetizing. The manager pleasantly told me he had stopped trading till the new caravan of goods should come.

Not far from Uzbektorg was the post office, also in a mud hut where a pioneering Russian postman

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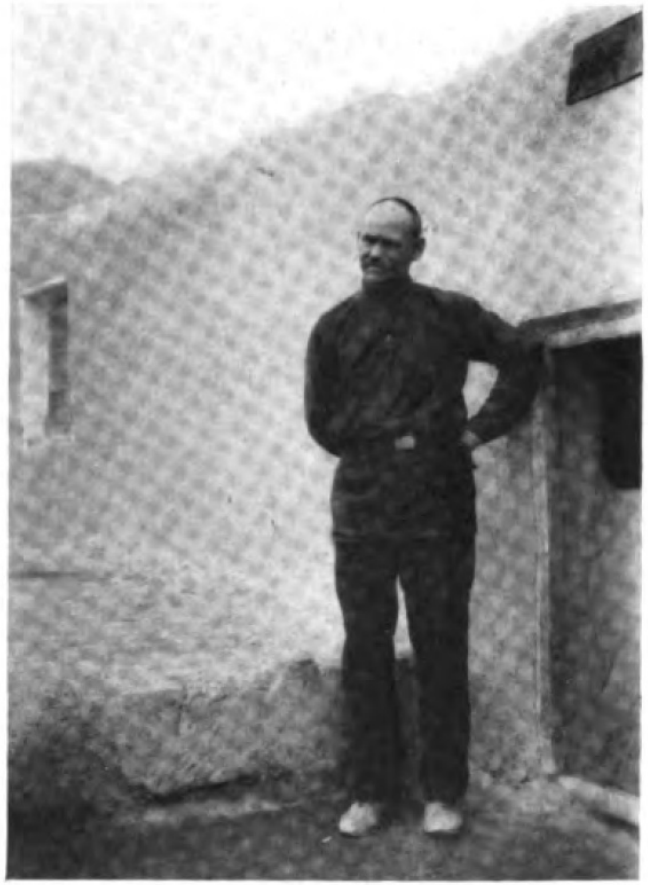
HORNS OF THE FAMOUS "OVIS POLI," A TRADE ARTICLE!



RUSSIAN POSTMAN AND HIS POST OFFICE WITH REAL WINDOWS!

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had lived for two years. He had made a tidy home out of his hole in the wall. Across the ceiling were stretched pieces of burlap, to keep pieces of dried mud from falling into the room. He had a fairly comfortable cot, on which a rug did duty as mattress. Other rugs ornamented his walls, but these, he explained, were not his; he merely cared for them for a friend in the barracks who would later take them out to his home. The postman proudly showed me his two tiny windows, and told me how he got the luxury of glass so far from the railroad. "They were building a schoolhouse here, and the roof fell in for lack of wooden supports; from the broken windows of the schoolhouse I got two pieces of glass to light my office." He had set them firmly in the mud of his walls, and thus secured light, though not air, in his dugout.

The mails, he told me, which used to come in Tsarist days by the Pamir trail we had followed, stopping at the stone post-stations, now travel a different and longer route, through the valleys of the Tadjiks. In former days, there was no mail for Tadjiks, who seldom read and sent no letters. But now the Tadjiks have their own republic, on which the central government in Moscow pays a heavy deficit, establishing schools, hospitals, local courts. Tadjiks are learning to read; they have business with the world; so they have also a postal system. Since Murghabi is in the Tadjik Republic, its mail goes down to Horog and thence by the valley of the Oxus,

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carried on mountain burros over high snowy passes, swimming across flooded rivers till it reaches the hot lowlands of Dushembe. A six weeks' journey it took for such things as newspapers; we arrived in mid-July, and the Pamir Post had received no word of MacDonald's election in England, which occurred May 30.

The largest house in Murghabi was the new dispensary, containing three rooms in which were received sick Kirghiz from a two-hundred-mile radius. It was the mate to the unfortunate schoolhouse, but its roof had been protected in time after the first failure, and had not fallen in. Not far away was the community bathhouse, in the usual Russian style of outer dressing room and inner bathing room to accommodate a group of people at once. In it the five women of our party simultaneously scrubbed off a week's travel dirt on the day after our arrival.

In the older cluster of huts whose clay walls were continuous for reasons of economy and warmth, it was not easy to locate the chief seat of government, the Executive Committee, or Ispolkom, of the Eastern Pamirs, where I hoped to find Mamashef and discuss the chances of journeying back with him to Osh. Some idlers in the market place at last showed it to me — a low door in a mud wall, no more pretentious than the equally low door of the washwoman or Chinese trader. It had been made of boards from packing cases, plentifully pasted with newspapers to close all cracks, and bound about the edges

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with strips of old sacking to insure a closer fit into the irregular mud wall. Pushing through this humble door, and bowing my head to avoid striking the roof of a corridor, I came to a mud-floored room where sat the president and secretary of the district, awaiting a conference with Mamashef. Here was the seat of government for the High Pamir.

The humble room was not without signs of the dignity of office. Several Kirghiz rugs, worn but still gay in color, covered parts of the earthen floor. On a long table close under the only window was a heap of Kirghiz newspapers and propaganda leaflets; it was the "library" of Murghabi, and several men sat reading. On another table stood a large globe, on which visiting Kirghiz might study geography. Behind the corner where sat the officials was fixed a large picture of Lenin; other parts of the clay walls were ornamented with giddy colored posters bearing propaganda in the Kirghiz tongue. Even my lack of the language could not keep me from understanding one of the posters, which was meant to be equally intelligible to illiterate herders —it showed a nomad Kirghiz leaping for joy as he draws the winning number of a government lottery loan. How many Kirghiz buy government loans and draw winning numbers I have no means of knowing; but even across the High Pamir the propaganda penetrates.

Mamashef was coming, the officials replied to my inquiry, and, as I looked towards the door, Mama-

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shef came. Three men were stooping through the narrow door and the low corridor; among them it was impossible to mistake Mamashef — not merely by the deference with which the men in the room regarded him, but by a certain self-confident air of authority. His long cloak of white native wool, woven warm and rain-proof by Tadjik hands to meet Tadjik conditions, and his skullcap embroidered with brilliant gold thread, gave him the appearance of a native chieftain, which was contradicted by the sheaf of papers he carried. The glance of his eyes, hospitable but commanding, indicated a man it would not be well to antagonize. My first thought was that here at last was someone who could adequately boss the horse Alai; even his tones from afar, I felt, would make that beast behave.

The president of the Ispolkom spoke briefly to Mamashef, who thereupon turned to me, saying that if I had any questions I wished to ask of the officials, he would interpret for me. In response to my query, he explained that Murghabi, as centre of government for the Eastern Pamirs, had a People's Court, a district hospital, and a school. The school had opened three years before and worked under many handicaps, chief of which was that the attempt to build a pretentious structure of four rooms had been unsuccessful; the building had collapsed, smashing the windows which had been brought on donkey backs from the railroad. It would need another season to make good this loss; meantime the children

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studied from room to room in the mud houses of the town. It was the only school in the Eastern Pamir and had only nineteen pupils, all boys, who came from scattered yurts and for whom the school therefore maintained a dormitory.

"We must make very strong agitation to get pupils," said Mamashef, interpreting the president, "for the parents here are extremely backward. They say: 'Our children will become Russians in these schools, instead of Mussulmans.' They don't teach there the Koran."

Although the school was not yet very popular, the president claimed that the local Kirghiz were strong supporters of the Soviet Power, "since it gives a self-elected government in which all the poor take part. Formerly the commander of the post appointed the governor of Murghabi, and we Kirghiz had nothing to say. But now — I myself am a poor man, having one horse, ten sheep, and two cows, yet I sit as president of the Executive Committee. Our secretary is still poorer than I, with only one horse and two wives; he formerly worked for a rich bey. Formerly the Tsar took head taxes from us all; now only the rich and the traders pay taxes. We poor pay nothing. And the men from the army post, instead of commanding, help us get books and teach our classes in politics."

According to the president, the People's Court in Murghabi had few serious cases such as theft or murder, but dealt chiefly with social changes, such

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as polygamy and the purchase of brides. "We do not trouble old cases of polygamy," he said. "If a man has already two wives, let him remain responsible for them both. But if a man is married, new wives are not permitted. To marry in these days needs civil registration, and we don't issue the permit. If he marries secretly a second wife, he may even get a prison sentence up to a year, while the second wife gets a divorce. Of course if there is a baby, he has to pay for it. Cases of bride purchase usually are carried to higher courts and may have a sentence as long as three years' enforced labor with confiscation of the bride money. There are many such cases, but by no means are they all discovered."

The president and secretary had been called to discuss a report by Mamashef and give their approval before he carried it to far-away Samarkand,[1] and also to the Central Asian Bureau of the Communist Party in Tashkent. Mamashef himself was not a government official, but a representative of the party, charged therefore with general inspection of all conditions and policies, with the right to make recommendations on all subjects. All afternoon he sat, first discussing his report with a group of Kirghiz, and then rewording it somewhat with the help of the president and secretary. He translated for me the chief items:—

[1] Since November 1929 Samarkand is no longer the capital of Tadjikistan, which has an independent Soviet republic, with capital at Dushembe (now Stalinabad), affiliated directly with Moscow.

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1. To readjust freight rates into the different parts of Tadjikistan on articles needed by Tadjiks and Kirghiz, so as not to penalize the more distant parts of the Eastern Pamir, where the people are the poorest.

2. To regulate land relations between the settled Tadjiks and the nomad Kirghiz.

3. To settle quickly the question of building schools in the Eastern Pamir.

Such were the problems with which Mamashef was dealing, in a dugout on the far edge of empire, consulting and working them out with two Kirghiz — poor men who were all but illiterate, but who had been chosen by an assembly of the nomads to be their government. He sat on a bench of carved earth, which had been left in the dirt of which the dugout was made; above him the rifts in the ceiling of sacks sifted down pieces of soil which were trampled into the floor. It was an amazing romance; all the more amazing in that they took it so matter-of-factly, with prosaic attention to detail, arguing over phrases, questioning, readjusting the message that would be basis for law in distant Samarkand.

After the session was over, Mamashef led me to the hut in which he lodged to discuss the problem of my journey. It also was a cave carved in earth, but I began to think less meanly of these dugout dwellings, so well suited to a climate of broiling sun and fierce winds against which they provide both shade and shelter. I learned now that they might even

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furnish a kind of luxury. The floor and benches and sleeping places of Mamashef's lodging were carved in earth, but were covered softly with rugs and furs which gave evidence that here dwelt a well-to-do Kirghiz, currying favor with authority by entertaining its representatives.

I warned Mamashef that I could be only a burden to any traveler, as I was exhausted and injured, and no horsewoman. He should consider carefully whether my presence on his trip to Osh would not seriously delay him. But Mamashef hospitably assured me that I was the guest of his nation, an honored guest who had come from very far. What were any of his minor concerns compared with this? True, he would normally ride to Osh in about five days, making perhaps ninety kilometres a day, as he had a good horse. But he would not think of making such speed with me. A mere sixty-five or seventy kilometres would be enough, reaching Osh in about seven days!

Seven days for a trip on which I had already taken seventeen! The prospect appalled me, and I said as much to Mamashef, adding that the forty or forty-five kilometres I had made daily with the army had seemed quite tiring in these high altitudes. He smiled with the superiority of a race of horsemen.

"That is because you have been riding with a large caravan, and with Russians. Russians do not know how to ride. They get up very late; they drink tea. They do not sit on their beasts till seven or eight

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o'clock, and then are already tired from moving about their tents. But we shall sit on our horses at five o'clock, and after two or three hours we shall stop at a yurt for milk or tea. We shall also ride at night, for there is a moon. Frequent rests but short ones will be our method, wasting no time with tents and baggage, but stopping to halt whenever you grow weary."

This was the moment when I should have politely refused Mamashef. If I had known more of the East, I should have understood his position. Born of a race which finds a straight negative discourteous, and asked by the post commander to take me out to Osh, he could do nothing but urge his hospitality upon me. True, he had hinted at the splendid speed he could make alone, but I chose to think this less desire than a touch of brag. It was not possible for him to do other than invite me; it was my place to understand his situation and withdraw. So for all that later occurred I must be held responsible. Or if he bears any responsibility at all, it is that he sounded at last the call to adventure, which had been sadly lacking thus far on the grey Pamir.

I too had found long halts for cooking and tent pitching as wearisome as riding; I too had learned that short rests, frequently spaced, suited me better than hours wasted at dawn and evening by the needs of baggage trains. My reason said that no method of any kind could make sixty-five kilometres in one day anything but utterly exhausting; but an inner

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voice was aroused which reminded of ancient days in the mountains, of all-night hikes when the recklessness of the attempt brought its own energy, of hours when exhaustion gave place to the thrill of second wind. The thought of this incredible trip with Mamashef restored my strength. My self-respect, which had trailed in the dust as I dragged along day after day towed by soldiers, suddenly felt young again at the thought of a moonlight ride through the pass of Kizil-art.

When Mamashef told me he wished to start the following morning, reason again raised its head for one final protest. The doctor had advised several days in bed followed by a slow trip of thirty-five kilometres daily. What foolhardiness was this, to start at a mad pace to-morrow! Yet, what was my alternative? To go on to Horog, spending two months more in the hills? Or to wait in Murghabi a fortnight or more, and then retrace my slow way with the retiring troops, stopping with no Kirghiz, measuring out a stupid routine march each day? And against this — moonlight riding, and stopping where one wished? In spite of reason and conscience, the last seemed best.

"Have your horse brought from the pasture to-night," he said. "I will look over his equipment before we start." He made light of the fears I expressed of the horse Alai. "If he gives trouble, I will ride him for a day; after that he will not worry you," he said. Again his self-confidence was such

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that I believed him; only some days later did I understand that often his assertions were those of a rising race which assures itself by bragging of slightly more than it can do.

As I went towards the fort to ask that my horse be brought from the pasture, three soldiers met me. They had helped tug Alai during our days of travel and were full of a kindly concern for my future. Did I really intend to ride that beast again? Surely I would reconsider? Why not trade him to a caravan man for a milder beast? I agreed that if a horse could be found, combining Alai's sure-footedness and easy gait with a better disposition, I would make the change. But I feared to leave the evils I had for others which might be worse. Where was the caravan man to trust on an evening's quick deal?

They offered at once to see the caravan man on my behalf and get a cavalry expert to judge the beasts. In the late afternoon I was aroused from a nap induced by my brief walk through Murghabi, and I went into the court of the post to find twenty-five soldiers gathered about a horse. It was not my horse, but the horse which the caravan man wished to give in its place. When I asked why he had not brought Alai, as I desired, he explained that my animal was too hard to catch, and could only be rounded up on the morrow when all the horses would be driven in. His tones implied that I was well rid of such a beast. Now here was a quiet mare, who would see me through. He jumped on the mare, which

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snorted and jerked madly; this was, he explained, due only to the annoyance of the crowd.

Something about these methods turned me against the mare. Where was Mamashef? I would defer to his judgment. At the hint of this, the crowd grew impatient. Some of them were friendly lads who feared for my life; others had gathered in idleness to see a horse-trade. But the horse-trade was n't occurring; a mere woman's indecision blocked it. The caravan man grew insulting. Was n't the word of a cavalry expert enough for me? The various "cavalry experts" (I presume they were such) when appealed to said, yes, the horse was strong enough to carry me to Osh, and its gait was not bad. Whether it was a better horse than Alai they could not tell, since Alai was far in the pasture. The new horse, they ventured, was rather old. To which the caravan man rejoined that it was better for me to get to Osh alive on an old horse than to be killed by a smart young stallion.

Under the pressure of twenty-five wills, I felt utterly weary. But I summoned strength to insist that I would make no change without the advice of Mamashef, who was now responsible for my journey to Osh. I stumbled down the hill to the town to look for the Kirghiz. By the time we returned, the crowd and the new horse had disappeared. It was now too late to bring Alai from the pastures. Mamashef, however, said that this was not serious. Some of the Kirghiz from surrounding encampments were giv-

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ing him a farewell party, and he would not leave till noonday.

That evening motion pictures were given in the big club tent of the army, which stood in the post enclosure. A radio concert also was announced, but the attempts of all the radio experts to get the receiving apparatus in order for the concert failed. I went for a short time to the picture programme, standing in a jam near the tent entrance. It was a propaganda drama about the ravages of syphilis in the family of an ignorant peasant. It was hard to see the screen over the heads of the crowd, and the story was not very thrilling; so I went early to my room to rest for the morrow, when all the caravan that had come with me to Murghabi would leave in different directions. My late companions would continue eight or nine days to Horog, while I should turn back on the old trail under new conditions, camping with the Kirghiz.

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XI

A KIRGHIZ COMMUNIST AND A KASHGAR HORSE THIEF

THE part of my journey that now begins is at once the most romantic and the most puzzling — my adventure with a Kirghiz communist and a Kashgar horse thief on the Roof of the World. I have no case at law if I try to prove it; and even my own memory is suspicious of details, for I talked with Mamashef in Russian, a language native to neither of us, and with the Kashgarlik I could not talk at all. I cannot even prove that the term "horse thief" is no libel; whatever proof exists is locked in the breast of Mamashef, who for reasons of his own will never use it.

Early on the morning of July 14, my horse Alai was brought from the furthest pasture, to which he had characteristically wandered, and delivered to Mamashef, whose practised eye at once took note of his shortcomings. Alai had an old, deep cut on one of his forelegs, which caused his frequent stumbling; Mamashef scorned the horsemanship of the Russian who had bought him without noting this defect. Alai had no shoes, and must be supplied forthwith, for his hoofs were wearing down. Mamashef sent two Kirghiz in search of horseshoes, which they readily found, and of nails, which were not to be had. By

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ingenious substitutions and blacksmith's work, the proper iron was made for Alai's hoofs. Shoeing took time, for he fought madly and had to be held by half a dozen men.

When at last the beast stood ready with proper shoes, but snorting angrily so that I dared not approach, I began to notice discrepancies in the harness as well. Gone was the fifty-foot rope I had bought in the Vale of Alai, and whose strands, quadrupled, had been proof against the horse's maddest plunges; it was replaced by two thin strands of lead rope, each less than two yards long, and either of which would break at the slightest pull. There were other minor losses of harness; I pointed them out to Mamashef. He at once sent some Kirghiz racing through the pasture to summon the caravan leader, who proved most suave and innocent. By much insistence I got back most of the harness, but the loss of the rope was attributed by the caravan man to so many causes, from the willfulness of Alai to the will of Allah, that we gave up the struggle. The caravan man went away in triumph; he had failed to cheat me the previous evening in a horse trade, but his "face" was restored; at least he had stolen my rope!

Mamashef now introduced to me a Kashgarlik, a "wealthy caravan man" who desired to travel with us, in order to have the escort of a person bearing arms. As an official, Mamashef was entitled to arms; he carried a gorgeous pistol, presented to him by some organization, and so covered with ivory and

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inlay work and gold inscriptions that I wondered if it were also made to shoot. He told me the Kashgarlik would carry my sheepskin, which overweighted and frightened Alai, and would lead my horse while he himself was busy with his farewell party. The fears of the Red soldiers on my behalf had so impressed me that I still felt it was necessary for Alai to be led.

The farewell party to Mamashef was given not in the town of Murghabi, but a few miles up the road, since it was a Kirghiz celebration, and, as such, needed plenty of space. Shortly after noon we started, Mamashef riding grandly ahead with an escort of several Kirghiz on holiday saddles, with silver ornaments and red cloth draperies. I trailed along behind with the Kashgarlik. When we had gone a short distance, other Kirghiz advanced to meet us, and led us towards a hillside where sat their assembled families, women with tall formal headdresses and children excited over the occasion. But personal costumes were far less important than those of the horses. Every horse was gayly caparisoned, in blue or green or scarlet cloth heavy with fringe or embroidery; some wore colored nets whose strands were held together by clasps of engraved silver.

A goat was killed and tossed among the riders; the farewell procession began. It bore a superficial resemblance to the famous sport of *Kapkari,* in which horsemen contend fiercely over the flesh of a slaughtered sheep or goat. Such is the typical basis of most formal celebrations among Kirghiz. But this time

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the contest was very playful and was hardly participated in by the older horsemen, who in dignified cavalcade paced beside Mamashef in farewell conversation. About them gamboled the younger riders, seizing the dead goat and tossing it far to a friend, who would catch it and ride racing ahead. They would lean to one side of the saddle, picking up the goat from the ground with a sudden low swing, carrying it a few yards in triumph and then tossing it towards Mamashef. The latter rode in stately manner, conversing chiefly with an old man in black velvet coat and hat; but he bore behind him a trophy which seemed to go ill with his grave countenance — the head of the dead goat which was given to him as the guest of honor.

Presently all drew up by the side of the road, and Mamashef came to help me dismount, saying that races were about to begin. The best of the horses disappeared in the distance, ridden not by their owners, but by the young sons of the family. The party waited. I made the acquaintance of the Murghabi school-teacher, who complained bitterly about the lack of equipment — neither building nor textbooks! The Tadjik Republic of which Murghabi is part, was not interested, he claimed, in schools for Kirghiz, and printed no books for them. There was no reason why textbooks should not be got from the Kirghiz Republic, to the north of them, since both were under the same Soviet flag, and he had asked that the Department of Education of the Tadjik Republic make

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such a request. Either the official feared to lose face by applying to another republic, or else he was simply lazy. Anyway, nothing had been done.

Excited shouts broke our discussion. Far over the hill appeared the racers, bearing down towards us. The old men of the Kirghiz leaned joyously forward, cheering on their sons. One of the boys drew ahead, and the various fathers began chaffing his proud dad. The words were Kirghiz, but the gestures were unmistakable. The speeding horses dashed past us in a wide ragged front which made necessary a quick retreat from their mad career. A flushed youth of fifteen years was winner.

The festive farewells ended. Mamashef took leave of the old leader very formally, and less formally of the others. The Kashgarlik had not waited to see the celebration, but had long since disappeared in the distance. Mamashef said he would meet us at our night's camp, a yurt with which both were acquainted. Together we loped along over the desolate plateau of rock and sand at the gait known as wide pacing, which carries forward first one side of the body and then the other in a twisting motion. The swinging step was quite agreeable at first. I was clearly going much faster than when with the troops. After a time the wide pacing became tiresome; then suddenly an acute pain shot through my spine at the waist. I attributed this to my former injury, thinking my back had become stiffened by rest at Murghabi. The pain rapidly increased and be-

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THE GRAND STAND AT THE RACES. KIRGHIZ ELDERS WATCHING THEIR SONS

CARRYING BABIES ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

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came unbearable; it seemed I had been foolhardy to start on this journey if a scant twenty kilometres was too much for me. When I mentioned this to Mamashef, he asked if I had belted myself properly, and told me the pain was not the result of my injury, but was caused by the wide pacing. Thereafter, under his direction, I always wound a heavy towel into a band about my waist and pulled it as tight as possible, which greatly lessened the pain.

Mamashef's hospitality was still fresh on this first afternoon. He rode beside Alai, watching his movements and keeping him at a proper pace. He inquired often if I were weary, and when after three hours I admitted that I was, he discovered a Kirghiz lad tending sheep in a near-by yurt and sent him off home for milk. We rested by a clear stream, and I was properly impressed by the genius of this Kirghiz who found yurts and shepherd lads and milk and running water where I had seen only gravel and sand.

We had left the road somewhat to the side for the sake of the milk, and I now noticed that Mamashef's eyes wandered ever more anxiously towards it. He explained that he was watching for the policeman from Murghabi, whom he expected to join us before evening. His presence was needed, since he alone knew the location of the yurt where we were to camp. The owner was an old acquaintance of Mamashef's, who had invited him to stop for a feast; but yurts change position often to follow the scant grass of the high plateau, and Mamashef had not traveled this

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way for months. The policeman had passed last week, and knew our exact destination. This was desirable, as it was growing dusk.

All these important facts Mamashef had hitherto failed to mention. When I asked why this necessary policeman had not come with us from Murghabi, I learned another fact equally novel. The policeman, said Mamashef, was taking a prisoner to the Alai, and had to wait till the court gave him custody. All of us, the policeman, the prisoner, the Kashgarlik, Mamashef, and I, would be guests of the same Kirghiz, sleeping in one yurt with him and his family. That is, if we were lucky; otherwise the policeman and his prisoner would sleep in the yurt, while Mamashef and I wandered in the dark seeking them.

A sharp anger which rose as I thought of the chances to which we had been so casually subjected was dulled by Mamashef's cheerful unconcern. Even he, however, looked relieved when we saw in the dusk across the valley two figures traveling with wide pacing from Murghabi. Their path paralleled ours; for there were many such paths in this wide valley, all of them little better than the flat rocky surface between them. The travelers had not seen us, and were not likely to, for clouds were swirling low, and a few drops of rain even drove into our faces, and they were intent on hastening forward into the purple darkness of the hills. Mamashef whipped our horses to a painful pace, which was clearly needed if we were not to lose sight of these guides. But

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even amid the discomfort I was pleasantly aware that the old monotony of the Pamirs was changing. The rain and the coming night added mystery to the landscape, which was well in tune with our anxious chase after the policeman and his prisoner.

Full darkness was upon us when at last we forded two bends of a shallow, foaming stream and approached a yurt dimly visible in the last twilight. Three angry dogs rushed at us, leaping and snarling; these watch dogs of the Kirghiz, never kindly to strangers, are trained to show special enmity towards those arriving after sundown. Even my height on the horse was not secure against them. But Mamashef nonchalantly rode forward, paying them apparently no attention, till the first leaped towards him. Then I saw a sudden whirling of his horse; there was a loud yelp of pain from the dog. Mamashef had skillfully used his horse's hind legs to kick the dog from his path. The other dogs slunk back; the master of the yurt came out, in answer to their yelps and our hail.

From within the yurt rose loud wailing, shrill and continuous, and yet with something dramatically artificial in its tone. Sounding thus in the darkness, after the howls of the dogs from this lonely yurt under a storm, it was indescribably eerie. I hesitated, but Mamashef bade me enter the yurt. At its far side two women knelt facing the wall; their voices rose and fell in continuous shrieks of lament. Not knowing the conduct proper for such an occasion, I stood

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near the door, but I saw that neither Mamashef nor our host, nor the policeman and prisoner who had arrived, paid any attention to the women, and that they, in turn, took no notice of us. Mamashef told me to make myself comfortable, as the women would soon finish their lament, which was the wail required by custom for the death of a near relative. A relative of the younger woman had recently died; the older woman was merely sociably accompanying the lament. I later learned that to be truly correct in my behavior I should have knelt and joined my wails to theirs, as a visiting woman. Such was the ancient manner; but even if I had not been an ignorant foreigner, they would not quite have expected it from a woman brought by Mamashef, who was a communist following new laws and new manners.

I slumped down wearily on my baggage and watched them. Each woman had an enormous headdress of white, reaching like a great mushroom at least a foot above her head. They were swathed from head to foot in all the incongruous finery they could muster, brilliant red striped drapery, great strings of corals combined with factory-made buttons, a gaudy Uzbek silk khalat, and a Russian head shawl of equally gaudy but quite contrasting colors. The European custom that mourners shall dress soberly to indicate that they have lost interest in finery is directly challenged by the contrary Kirghiz custom, which has an equally good basis — that mourners shall dress in all their best apparel to pay tribute to the dead.

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After half an hour of monotonous wailing, the women suddenly ceased, took off the lofty headdresses and the more cumbersome garments, and busied themselves with housework as if nothing had happened. There were no tears in their eyes or sorrow on their faces; their chief emotion was now a lively curiosity in me, a stranger woman. Of this emotion not a trace had been allowed to appear on their faces during the wailing period required by custom.

A lamb was killed, and preparations for a feast in honor of Mamashef were clearly being made, but since I had by no means recovered from my injuries and felt exhausted from my first attempt at wide pacing, Mamashef suggested that I go to sleep. I prepared for bed in the way to which I had become accustomed in the Pamirs, putting on all the extra clothing I possessed, taking off my high boots, and slipping into my sleeping bag of camel's wool. For this I was soon sorry, for a great fire was built in the centre of the yurt, enough for the stewing of an entire lamb, and the enclosed space soon became unbearably hot. One by one I removed the extra garments, and crept between the circle of guests and the outer wall of the yurt to shield myself from the direct blaze. I was tempted to go outside the yurt, but felt too exhausted to rise for that purpose; the elevation was over 13,000 feet, which increased the weariness of movement. Outside in the darkness a cold rain had set in.

These Kirghiz of the High Pamir feel the same oppression if they visit the lowlands as we lowlanders

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feel in trips to the heights. When Alexander the Third was crowned "Tsar of all the Russias," he ordered that representatives of all the nations under his rule should be sent to the coronation. Some of the hardy Pamir mountaineers died on reaching the railroad, from heart failure due to loss of elevation. The yaks of these heights, also, on which the natives ride, can rarely be transported to low levels. Most of those taken to zoölogical gardens soon die, and the few who survive are sickly.

For over an hour the fire raged, stewing the lamb. The pieces were passed about, but Mamashef, the guest of honor, refrained. For him was reserved a second course — the head of the lamb. Stuck on a long stake and held directly in the flames, it now began to fill the air with a smell of burning hair and skin. With this after a time there mingled a still more nauseating smell from somewhere beyond the fire, and I saw that the lamb's intestines had been brought from outside to protect them from the dogs and were now heaped in the iron pot which had contained the lamb stew. This also was to share our yurt for the night.

The head was finally roasted, charred outside and sufficiently cooked within. It was handed with deference to Mamashef; I rejoiced that he, and not I, was guest of honor to whom such delicacies fell. Mamashef, as important official, was a regular collector of heads; he still had a bloody goat's head in his dunnage. As the fire died down, I revived

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enough to sit up and take note of the discussions, asking Mamashef in occasional pauses to tell me the subject of debate.

A serious marriage problem was involved. The Kirghiz from a near-by yurt, who had come as guest to the feast, asked advice from his friends. Before the revolution he possessed a wife who cost him five hundred sheep. When the new women's freedom was granted by the Soviet Power, his wife left him, but her parents refused to return the sheep. It was a heavy blow, for he was not wealthy; five hundred sheep were a fortune, only to be risked for the equally needed services of a woman who would make his yurt and tend his ewes.

A new wife was needed. The Soviet Power, which had robbed him of his first woman, should now, he felt, give him a bride without payment, since bride purchases are forbidden. But parents everywhere demanded illegal payment for fresh daughters, so he had his eye on a woman who would be less costly, having already been married. Her husband had not lived with her for many years, as he had a younger wife who pleased him better. Yet the first wife was a good keeper of yurts, and a hard worker with the ewes. He had several times approached this woman with offers of marriage, but the husband, though undesirous of her favors, was unwilling to yield her labors to another.

"Now here's the trouble. This woman does not recognize the Soviet laws; she will not come to me

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without permission from her husband. She says, 'Let him give me a divorce in the proper manner by bidding me go.' What shall I do? The Soviet power takes one woman from me, with these new laws of women's freedom, and now, when the Soviet power should give me another wife for nothing, she will not recognize the laws and leave her husband."

The assembled friends advised caution. Better forget this woman! If you steal her by force or craft from an unwilling husband, he will surely kill you for the theft. . . . Such was the social viewpoint of these Kirghiz who were making a feast in honor of Mamashef, a communist, a follower of a distant and dead German philosopher, Karl Marx. The whirlwind of revolution has blown together many strange combinations, but none more strange than this. Mamashef told me, in explaining conditions of life among the mountain Kirghiz, that even members of the Young Communist League could not get a bride without the illegal purchase, which their parents made for them, leaving to the youth the polite fiction of ignorance.

The feasting ended; the older woman closed the round opening in the yurt's roof by drawing over it a piece of circular felt. Two or three Kirghiz who lived near withdrew to their homes and the others lay down around the fire — the policeman and his prisoner, the Kashgarlik caravan man, Mamashef, and the family of our host. At half-past four I woke briefly, went out to see a crisp, enchanting dawn which

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gave life to the Pamirs, and on being told that our two horses had disappeared, I promptly went to sleep again. Long search for horses was such a commonplace that I hailed it as a chance to rest longer. The policeman and his prisoner left for Kara-Kul.

At seven o'clock Mamashef entered the yurt. "The Kashgarlik has stolen our horses," he said, with decision. How did he know? I asked. The Kashgarlik had left the yurt before the crack of dawn and had now disappeared. His heavy baggage, an impediment to a man traveling fast, and not to be removed without risk of arousing the yurt, was left behind. But my sheepskin was gone, and his horse, as well as ours. The Kirghiz searching for our beasts had found the tracks of three horses making straight to the east, where the Chinese frontier was a few hours away.

"Two days ago in Murghabi," said Mamashef, "the Kashgarlik gambled very high. He lost money which belonged not to him, but to his brother, who is a rich caravan man in Osh. This frightened him, and he has decided to steal our horses and make for Kashgar and set up in business on his own." These were the clear and plausible deductions given me by Mamashef. He sprang at once to action. Summoning a conference of four Kirghiz from our yurt and two others from the neighboring yurt, he discussed the problem briefly. Soon he was able to announce in tones of satisfaction, "They have gone

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off to catch him." I went to the door of the yurt and saw two horsemen galloping into the distance.

"How can they catch him?" I asked. "He has at least three hours' start and it is not far to the frontier."

"The man who has gone was a famous leader of basmachi," answered Mamashef with some pride. "He knows every pass well. As for the frontier — who knows the line of the frontier in these hills? I have promised the horse of the Kashgarlik as his reward if he brings them all back."

If the thought crossed my mind that Mamashef had no authority to give away the horse, even of a thief, I did not voice it. Here in the hills, where swift action was needed, and where the Kirghiz was asked to exhaust his own beast by hard travel at a high elevation, the recompense seemed just. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a horse for a horse! I rejoiced that the burden of decision fell not on me but on Mamashef, and returned to the yurt for a day's rest while awaiting the issue. But I seriously doubted whether anyone could overtake the Kashgarlik, who had three mounts available for speed.

During the day the Kirghiz women continued their arts of housewifery, made necessary by the feast of the preceding evening. They made sacks for household use from the sheep's entrails. The older woman turned the organs inside out and scraped off all fat, using both knife and fingers for this purpose till her arms were covered to the elbow with vile-smelling

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grease. She then boiled the entrails, and scraped them again till the membranes were freed from all fat and fleshy matter. Then, placing the opening of one of the large organs to her lips, she inflated it with her breath to a size considerably larger than it could have had in the body of the sheep, tied the orifice shut, and hung it to dry from the centre of the roof, where the sun above and the smoke below could reach it. She repeated this work with a smaller sac, and thus had two bags, water-tight, in which could be carried the chief food products of the family: the airann and the hospitable koumiss.

She next scraped the skin of the sheep free from all adhering flesh, and hung it to dry on the inner wall of the yurt, its inner surface still pink with blood veins, but rapidly paling. She cleaned the iron caldron in which the entrails had stood all night, and in it set to boil the morning's milk of several dozen ewes. This, after boiling, was poured into a large wooden vessel with tight cover, where it could sour into airann. In summer there is a surplus of airann, so part of it is boiled again and the resultant whey drained off, leaving a kind of cottage cheese known as *surmé*. When surmé is made into cakes and dried in the sun, it becomes curd, in which form it may be saved for winter needs. The curd when mixed with water and boiled becomes airann again, which is thus the staple food the whole year through.

Meantime, with a whole day to rest, I did my own housekeeping chores. I took a shivering, but

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refreshing bath in the clear stream, and washed out some handkerchiefs. Returning to the yurt, I found that I had a few teaspoons of cocoa left in my bag, so I took some of the boiling ewes' milk and made a delicious drink. Some coarse bread bought at the Murghabi fort was not yet exhausted; two slices of this and a cup and a half of cocoa made a meagre meal, but more than I had been able to eat at any one time for days. Much refreshed, I revised my opinion of the Pamirs. The swirling clouds of the night before, the crisp dawn of the morning, had brought the mountain glamour to their gravel-floored valleys. Even the loss of my horse did not dismay me; I was grateful for a day's rest, and let the future alone, knowing that somehow, through Mamashef or by return to Murghabi, I should eventually reach Osh.

The old man of the yurt grew pleasantly garrulous, inquired about my distant husband and children, and, learning that there were none, politely invited me to remain in the Pamirs. I protested that I should be of no use in a Kirghiz family, being unable to make airann or clean sheep entrails or beat out the felt for a yurt. He courteously rejoined that for me such labor was unnecessary; I might remain an honored guest forever. I praised his camping site, but intimated that many people, even if not a husband, expected me in Moscow.

Mamashef, however, grew steadily more restless and bad-tempered, looking at me as if I had caused him bad luck. My attempts to talk brought only

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gruffness. He laid out matches on the ground to tell fortunes, and explained with a smile that he was trying to tell whether the men would catch the Kashgarlik. He laughed, wishing me to understand that he did not believe his own fortune-telling; as a communist, he implied, he scorned such ideas. But suddenly the matches came right, and he jumped up, crying: "They've got him. . . . And now I'll take the horse from him and make him walk as prisoner to Osh." Thereafter his temper improved.

During the day I learned that Mamashef had a Kirghiz mother but a Tatar father, and had been educated to be a mullah. As a precocious youth, Mamashef had read prayers to thousands of assembled Mussulmans. This had not satisfied him, and he had demanded a Russian training, which he was beginning to get when the Revolution came. It is hard to tell what chance or conviction brought him to the side of the Reds in those days, since his father was clearly one of the wealthier tribesmen. But even wealthy natives suffered oppression of Tsardom, and the class war between local beys and laborers had not yet developed. From whatever cause Mamashef first entered the Red army, he quickly rose through its ranks and became a leader. From this point his progress was typical: a year in a "party school" at party expense; another year of work among his people, followed by still more schooling as he showed qualities of leadership. When the Kirghiz Republic was formed and Kirghiz troops were

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organized, Mamashef was prepared to work in its War Office. Later he had been made party representative in the Pamirs, and from this post he was now to be transferred; there had been some complaints about his dictatorial habits from Horog. He had changed jobs often — at least once a year; this was neither a sign of failure nor of success, but of the restlessly developing people among whom he worked. He avoided theoretical discussion with me, so I could not tell how deep the doctrines of Marx had gone, but on those points on which he expressed opinions, such as the relation of laborers and beys, or the problems of nationalities, he held the accepted views.

Long after dark the pursuers returned. Much to my surprise they had met success, and they brought back with them the Kashgarlik and all three horses. Mamashef was jubilant as he told me the conditions under which the capture had been made. "They came upon him at the very frontier. He was seeking the way through the hills. He did not recognize them, but asked them the road to Kashgar, saying he had lost his way.

"'You need not the road to Kashgar but the road back,' they told him. Whereupon he grew disturbed and asked their meaning. 'You have strange horses with you,' they answered. Terrified at being discovered, he turned about and came back."

Such was the tale first told me by Mamashef, though later I was to hear a different version. "Will

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you give his horse to the Kirghiz who caught him?" I asked.

Mamashef looked somewhat disconcerted. The return of the horse restored the sense of law and order, and he knew he had exceeded his powers in the morning's excitement. "It is not exactly legal," he admitted. "I will talk to him in the morning and threaten a trial at Murghabi. Perhaps he will himself give up his horse rather than have a trial." Thus Mamashef consoled himself for the night, while I rejoiced that I did not have to face his problem. The Kirghiz captors were also clearly wondering how the pledge of a horse would be met. They also knew it was hardly legal; but what were laws to a nomad? Mamashef's prestige and that of the Communist Party might well depend in their minds on his power to keep his promise.

Discussions began in the morning and continued long. The balance swayed in various directions. The Kashgarlik at first refused to give up his horse as forfeit, demanding instead a trial at Murghabi. All prepared to start for the fort, and Mamashef bade me wait in the yurt, saying he would return that night or the following day. They had not ridden ten minutes towards Murghabi when the Kashgarlik weakened and agreed to surrender the animal. He demanded, however, that he should be set on the road with his baggage as far as Kara-Kul, where he might meet caravan men of his acquaintance and be by them conveyed to his brother at Osh. Over this

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point discussion again started. Mamashef was willing, but the Kirghiz captors refused. Their horses were exhausted from an all-day gallop and unshod. They refused to make a two-day trip to Kara-Kul.

After much more debate Mamashef came to me. "Have you fifty rubles?" he asked in some embarrassment. I admitted that I had. "The Kirghiz agree to take seventy-five rubles in lieu of the horse," he replied in somewhat worried tones, "so that the Kashgarlik can go with us to Kara-Kul. I have given my silk shirt and boots, while he has given his rope and blanket. They count this as twenty-five rubles, but we still need fifty. The Kashgarlik will give you a receipt promising to repay you in Osh, if necessary by selling his horse."

"But why should we pay to take the Kashgarlik to Kara-Kul?" I demanded. "It was bad enough when you promised to give his horse, but all this bargaining with money is still more illegal. Better take him to Murghabi and let the court decide."

"We should lose much time if we went to Murghabi," he said. I knew what worried him most was not the loss of time, but of prestige, for the court would settle the question without the promised reward to the captors. He sought for a compromise that would give satisfaction to all, and sacrificed his one silk shirt to save his reputation. Since I also did not wish to be left at the yurt forever, I compromised even as he, and gave the fifty rubles.

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We had arisen so early that even after this discussion we were able to leave the yurt by 9.15 in the morning. I was rested by two nights' sleep and a long day's idleness. I belted myself tightly against the pain caused by wide pacing. So we swung along easily and made by one o'clock the twenty-four kilometres to Ak Baital Station, the yurt by the turbulent river where the troops had camped the night before Murghabi. Beyond this point, we knew, the trail led steadily upward, away from all pasture, through the high pass of Ak Baital at 15,070 feet. Though it was a long day's ride to the next forage, and the bleak pass itself would be reached in nighttime, "We shall push on," said Mamashef. "To-night is full moon."

We rested for three hours to feed the horses. It was not a good rest; lying in the yurt, I shivered, and lying in the sun, I blistered. But we made a lunch of tea and hard lepeshka, and were able to buy some barley for the animals. At four o'clock we left for a night ride through the highest point of the Pamir trail. I was fresh enough to feel a thrill at our foolhardiness, satisfaction in remembering the end of the horse theft, and amusement in the thought that the thief was traveling with us, meekly pulling my horse Alai.

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XII

THREE MAD DAYS TO THE ALAI

THE start from Ak Baital Station on the trail to the high pass was the most enjoyable ride I had had in the Pamirs. It was four o'clock, and the sun was no longer scorching; soon the long shadows of peaks lay upon the valley, adding an evening charm; there was a glow of adventure in braving a 15,000-foot pass by moonlight. But this sense of joyousness did not long endure. As hour followed hour, and thirty-five kilometres grew to forty-five traversed since morning, exhaustion grew, struggling at first against the glamour of sunset, till gradually the sense of weariness was stronger than that of beauty. Another hour, and the trail up the desolate valley seemed interminable.

My horse Alai was also excessively tired. For three weeks he had carried me and some sixty pounds of baggage over high passes with scant rations of grain and infrequent pastures. The trip with the Kashgarlik to the Chinese frontier had not improved his condition. I was no longer afraid to ride him without aid; he lacked the spirit to throw me, but he also began to lack the spirit necessary for going ahead at all. When I whipped him, he paid no attention.

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At times the Kashgarlik took a rope to pull him, but the short sharp trot of his horse did not synchronize with Alai's natural pace, and threw him into a rough jolting. It was easy enough to ride with Mamashef's restless urging voice behind me, for Alai feared the Kirghiz's voice more than my whip. But Mamashef had no taste for the post of driver to other horses. He preferred to gallop ahead, and whenever he did so Alai would stop entirely, till I exhausted myself in fruitless whipping and Mamashef came back angry and handed my reins to the Kashgarlik.

The fickle mood of the Kirghiz had begun to change. His hospitality, so marked on the first afternoon, was wearing thin. Or was it that he felt, as an occasional look or sentence indicated, that I brought bad luck to his journey? Or did he resent my presence because I knew of the theft of horses and the very complicated manner in which he had compounded a felony? Whatever the cause for Mamashef's change of heart, his courtesy passed swiftly into a driving annoyance.

Long before we reached the foot of the last sharp ascent, the night had grown dark. The expected moon was hidden by heavy clouds which threatened storm and made the path hard to see. But here was no place to stop; there was no pasture for many miles, and the weary beasts, if compelled to a night without fodder, would be unable to proceed at all in the morning. The only chance now was to make haste through the pass, and reach grass somewhere

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beyond. It grew very cold, with a sharp wind howling between the hills. I could dimly see against the sky in front that the Kashgarlik, who had been carrying my sheepskin, had put it on. I wanted to wear it myself, for now, if any time, I needed it. But it seemed impossible to overtake him; I chose to think he kept ahead designedly in order to use the sheepskin. The path was invisible in the darkness, and Alai stumbled often.

All paused at the foot of the steep ascent and I overtook the Kashgarlik, who surrendered my sheepskin rather sullenly, as if his long carrying of it and almost successful theft had given him some rights. I was already so frozen that at first the sheepskin seemed to make little difference. For a short time I had no need to urge Alai forward; on ascents he always showed desire to pass the horse ahead. I let him find the trail which I could not see, and turned my eyes to the peaks around us, mysteriously dim, but sometimes gleaming into a transient brightness as the moon, hidden from us, touched distant snow slopes. Even under the weariness I was aware of excitement, as I rose through the dim snow peaks with Alai feeling his way through the gulf of blackness below me.

The hours wore on towards midnight, and again weariness triumphed; to it was added a mountain sickness which caused me to stop often and annoyed Mamashef. We went through the pass and down again for what seemed a long distance, yet no possi-

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MAMASHEF DRIVING THE HORSE THIEF BEFORE HIM

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ble camping site appeared. Once or twice we left the path and fumbled our way towards the sound of a distant stream, to find that it foamed through rocks without a blade of grass. At last, sometime after midnight, we drew near the deeper darkness of high cliffs, and our horses suddenly turned aside of themselves and began hungrily to struggle for the thin pasture they had found. They had fixed our camp for us; the grass was wet with dew and the ground beneath it sodden. Yet of the water thus soaking our feet was nowhere any stream to drink. Hungry and thirsty, but too exhausted to move further, I threw my sheepskin on the ground and crawled into my sleeping bag above it. The horses, tied neck to neck lest they eat too suddenly after the heavy journey, were angrily hammering the ground with their feet not far from my head. Two or three times I moved from them and each time the ground seemed wetter. Even through sheepskin and sleeping bag the side next the ground ached with cold. My last thought was a wonder what we could do if the Kashgarlik should steal the horses again.

Suddenly I was aroused by movements near me. Still fearing theft of the horses, I lifted heavy eyes to see Mamashef rolling from his blanket and the Kashgarlik placing the packs on the horses; the saddles had not been removed at all. It was the gray before dawn, but the road and hills were now distinctly visible, desolate and uninteresting as I had remembered them. This was the valley where I had

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looked in vain for water, finding it only in morasses and never in drinkable streams.

Even the few movements needed to put on my boots and roll up my bedding were wearisome, accomplished with several pauses. It was not yet five o'clock when we were on our way, without food or tea or even a drink of water. Mamashef expected a yurt at Muskol Station, but when we passed it about seven o'clock it was still as I remembered it — empty, without grass or water, and surrounded by skeletons. At this Mamashef grew impatient and galloped away into the distance. An hour later, when I thought he had gone entirely, we came upon him grazing his horse and resting beside a stream. Here we all dismounted to doze in the sun, which was already blazing so that we had to cover our heads. To our bodies, numbed by the damp, cold night, the warmth was grateful; we thawed ourselves and took short naps till ten o'clock, pleasantly aware that in the past twenty-four hours, since leaving our hosts at the Kirghiz yurt, we had covered two days' stages of forty-five kilometres each. Twice as fast as the time set for the army! It was worth some weariness to make such time. I brought out one of the lepeshka I had taken from Murghabi, broke it with rocks, and washed it down with water. It was my first food since the noon of the day before, yet I could eat only a few mouthfuls.

The rest of the way to Kara-Kul was a dreary grind, brightened briefly by a distant view of gor-

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geous blue waters, which soon sank from sight behind sand hills and morass. In mid-afternoon Mamashef decided to gallop ahead and hold a conference with the men at Kara-Kul before evening fell. He left me behind with the Kashgarlik, as he had in the morning, but this time I did not see him again for several hours. (I began to be glad that we had taken the horse thief with us, even at the outlay of my fifty rubles to redeem his horse.) Mamashef showed an increasing tendency to abandon me in the wilderness; and I knew that alone I could not make my weary beast take me to Kara-Kul. But the Kashgarlik had been a caravan man before he became a horse thief; or perhaps he assumed both characters alternately, as opportunity presented. By fixing my mind firmly on his character of caravan man, and giving him casual orders, I found that he responded. Soon he was driving my horse ahead and helping me mount and dismount, as docile as any hired guide, and merely showing by an occasional sullen restlessness that our only financial arrangement was his agreement to pay me fifty rubles, a reversal of what must seem to a caravan man the proper relation. It almost seemed as if the result of the horse theft was to give me a guide for nothing.

We came at last to the three remembered yurts of Kara-Kul at six in the evening, having covered in thirty-three consecutive hours a distance I had made with the troops in three and a half days. In the larger yurt the males of the entire settlement, to the

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number of half a dozen, were grouped about a central fire with Mamashef, who held with them some discussion of which I never learned the theme. He informed me that I might sleep in one of the other yurts, where the man was absent and where I should have only three Kirghiz women for company. Water was boiling; a meal of tea and lepeshka was secured in a few moments. For the first time since leaving Murghabi, I was able to loosen my clothing and apply talc or vaseline to chafed and burned parts of my body. By seven o'clock I was asleep.

It was seven o'clock next morning when I awoke, greatly refreshed. But why, I wondered, had I been allowed to sleep so late? I soon learned the reason. Mamashef came in, angrily, and said that my horse and that of the Kashgarlik had disappeared, and that his own beast had been tethered all night to prevent its wandering and was now hungry. "I shall not wait any longer," he declared. "My horse is in bad shape and needs good pasture at once. I shall ride through to the Alai and camp at Bordoba this evening to await you. As soon as you find your horse, you may come on with the Kashgarlik."

This was the most serious situation that had yet faced me on the entire trip. I told Mamashef in no uncertain terms that I should consider it abandoning me in the wilderness of the High Pamir if he left me now. The Kashgarlik could not possibly find our horses afoot, and even if he could I would not trust myself with him for what might easily become a two

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days' journey, with a night spent in the open without tent. If Mamashef left me now, let him not await me in Bordoba, for I should not arrive there. I would either be lost in the hills or would get through somewhere to some authority, where I should certainly complain that he, who had promised the fort commander to look after me, had left me.

I believed that I had impressed him with my arguments, and did not follow him when he went sullenly out of the yurt. But ten minutes later the Kirghiz women came running, shouting: "Mamashef — Alai; Mamashef — Alai!" I went out to see the tall form in the white Tadjik cloak riding away in the distance towards the Alai Valley. I shouted, — I almost shrieked, — but if he heard he made no sign. I hoped for a moment that he had gone to seek our horses, and went to his yurt to find that his baggage was gone. It was clear that he had left me alone with the Kashgarlik horse thief at Kara-Kul, among Kirghiz with whom I could not exchange a word, without a horse, without food, with some fifty rubles in money, and two days' journey distant from the next habitation, even of Kirghiz.

Hopelessly I ran after him, shouting, till suddenly I observed the Kirghiz women watching me appraisingly. At once I realized my position. If I were left here for several days, everything turned on my own self-possession. It was the only weapon with which I might secure safely the things I needed: shelter and food and help in finding my horse. I could

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not know in what light Mamashef had presented me to them, but I recalled gratefully that I had met them before as a guest of the army. I must keep my status as a traveler whom they were serving; once let me become a refugee, and I might count myself lost. Quickly I transformed my shouts into expressions of rage instead of panic, and sought the Kashgarlik, who was resting disconsolately in the other yurt. I asked him sharply, in Russian which he only half understood and in signs which were quite intelligible, why he was not hunting the horses. He indicated that hunting had been of no avail; I ordered him to continue. Reluctantly he rose and left the yurt, and I returned to my own yurt to rest and make cocoa, relieved that the Kashgarlik had accepted my authority.

In the next three hours I had leisure to consider my position and plan my course of action. Several times I sought the Kashgarlik, finding him each time resting in a yurt and each time ordering him out to find the horses. He obeyed, but he was clearly sabotaging, for which I could not blame him. He was afoot at 13,000 feet elevation where motion was difficult; the horses might be scattered anywhere over a hundred square miles of territory. If he found them, it would be hard to catch them unaided; the Kirghiz men of the encampment had scattered in all directions at dawn, and no beasts were visible but sheep. Moreover, it was clearly to the Kashgarlik's advantage not to find the horses immediately.

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Why should he weary himself to overtake Mamashef, who was the only responsible witness of the crime he had committed? If he delayed with me two days in Kara-Kul, with Kirghiz to whom he could speak and I could not, the situation would be in his hands. He might even make away with the horses to the Chinese frontier, continuing his interrupted theft. Or if he had turned caravan man now, he would surely find means to possess himself of the receipt for fifty rubles which I held in my pocket. Meantime I gained a little time by giving him orders and keeping him busy, hoping that he had not yet understood his advantage as clearly I had.

My own position, however, was by no means hopeless. Whatever the Kashgarlik might say to my Kirghiz hosts, they had seen me arrive once with the army, and my present hostess had received me from Nikolaief as a guest needing better care than the army tent afforded. If these Kirghiz were, as I surmised, authorized keepers of a station for caravans, I was reasonably safe with them. My fifty rubles remaining was ample for much more than a week's stay in their yurt, with supply of milk and meat; it was enough even to induce one of the men to hunt my horse. I therefore decided not to set out alone with the Kashgarlik, but to remain at Kara-Kul till some caravan arrived. If it were going to Osh, I would journey with it; if to Murghabi, I would send a note to the fort.

Having reached this decision, I rested awhile in

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the yurt, and from time to time walked to a little hillock to see if horsemen were approaching from either direction. There was little hope of this, for caravans arrive in the evening; I went mechanically, having nothing else to do. Suddenly, at ten o'clock, I saw three horsemen coming from the direction of the Alai. I went back to my yurt and began to write a note to the commander of the fort. A few moments later the Kirghiz women came joyfully running, shouting something in which I distinguished only the word "Mamashef."

Incredulously, I went out of the yurt. It was indeed Mamashef, approaching with the Kashgarlik and another Kirghiz on our three horses. He was in a towering rage. When I ran to meet him, convinced that he had not meant his desertion, he let loose on me the vials of wrath. Fool that he was to have brought me along! I had delayed him by a horse theft for a full day! I had kept him back again for a whole morning at Kara-Kul! His horse was hungry, and badly galled under the saddle, and would be worth a hundred rubles less when he came to sell him in Osh! It was all my doing — bad luck that followed with me!

Even under his rage I believed at first that he had returned voluntarily to help me, and for this I forgave much. But an incautious phrase loosened in anger made clear the reason for his return and his wrath. Eight kilometres down the road he had come upon our horses, whose instinct was leading them to pas-

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tures in the Vale of Alai. They had begun to follow him, and he had seen his position. For him, a responsible communist, to appear without the guest entrusted to him was bad enough, but could be explained by some excuse, such as my illness. But to arrive in the Alai with the horse of his guest and without the guest herself was clearly impossible. Cursing, he had been forced to return to Kara-Kul.

Never before in my life have I been in the presence of an angry male upon whom I was dependent, and to whom I dared therefore not reply. Yet this has been the traditional position of women for ages, and though modern doctrines of equality had hitherto spared it me, an age-old instinct now arose at need. Meekly I assumed the blame for the saddle galls on a horse I had never touched; while privately I bestowed the scathing thought that, being a Kirghiz horseman, Mamashef should know better than to leave his saddle on the horse continuously. Meekly I accepted the blame for the horse theft and the delay at Kara-Kul, and all other evils, only asking whether it was now the intention to set forth or to remain. "I am leaving at once," announced Mamashef. "You can do as you like." And, still meekly, I informed him that I was long since ready.

As a matter of fact, I was n't. But as soon as I got my horse in my hands, I managed to sabotage for ten minutes while I asked the keeper of the yurt to mend the reins. They had been broken by the horse's struggles for grass two evenings previous, and Mam-

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ashef had impatiently contented himself with tying the ends together, in a knot from which the stiff leather strap always slipped in a short time. Several times I had found myself without any reins to guide my horse, and forced to rely entirely on the Kashgarlik's tugging. In less than five minutes the owner of the yurt pierced holes in the leather and joined the two ends firmly with heavy string. Then we set out from Kara-Kul. It was ten o'clock already, and we had fifty-eight kilometres to Bordoba.

Mamashef was still very angry, and expressed it in many ways. Sometimes he galloped ahead and shouted back his wrath that I could not keep up. More often he rode behind and gave Alai a vicious cut with his whip, suddenly, and just when it seemed least needed, making the horse jump sideways or stumble. An instinct told me that he would not be ill pleased to see me thrown — not seriously, of course, certainly not seriously enough to delay him, but enough to express his vexation at his forced return. I knew he wished me at least to protest exhaustion and ask for a rest, so that he might deny it, and might again explain that I was to blame for all delays.

But for the first time in my entire journey I rode easily, without weariness or fear. A new spirit, it seemed, had been stung to life within me. Either the long rest of the night had refreshed me, or the morning's predicament had aroused my self-reliance, or else I was suddenly learning to ride after a month

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on horseback. Whatever the cause, I discovered myself at ease on Alai. His sudden lurches under the biting whip of Mamashef vexed me, but caused no fear. More than a score of times the weary beast fell almost to his knees, dashing my feet against the ground and out of the stirrups, and several times his hind legs sank with a sickening jolt; yet I swayed with his motion, and kept in the saddle and pulled him strongly back on his course. Even if he should run away as on the day he had thrown me, I dared believe that now I could keep my seat. But poor Alai had no longer a thought of running — it was all he could do to walk.

Hour after hour we drove along in the blazing sun, Mamashef taciturn and wrathful, the Kashgarlik beating his horse, and I exulting in my new control and wondering if it would last. I had no doubt that Mamashef could tire me out if he wished to, and little doubt that he wished. But the blue waters of Kara-Kul dropped at last from sight behind the ridges, and I had barely time to turn my eyes for a farewell glance. Down rocky trails we swung, where the horses stumbled; through sandy drifts where they labored with panting breath. Hours on hours we went through the Death Valley with sand storms in our faces, seeing nothing ahead but a few feet of pathway and that not always certain. Only by huge rock cairns that from time to time peered from the sand gusts did we know we were on our way.

In utter silence we rode till late afternoon, when at

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last I ventured to ask the time of Mamashef, since my own watch was long since broken. "Half-past four," he told me. Again I exulted. I knew I was tired, but we had ridden longer than I thought; whereas always before one hour had seemed like two.

"We are going well," I remarked. At last Mamashef broke silence. "Very well indeed," he said approvingly. "You are riding very well now." And he turned to the Kashgarlik for confirmation, adding: "When we get through the Red Passage we will stop and eat." He had volunteered; I had not begged him.

An hour or so later we halted in the pass Kizil-art, at the first spot of grass we had seen since Kara-Kul. There was no stream, but my canteen held a cup and a half of water, while Mamashef had a small flask of wine. I brought out a last tin of army beef, saved for emergencies and a last lepeshka. With these we made a feast. They were the last of my provisions, except for a little tea and sugar. They were no longer needed, for we had reached pasture; one last descent would bring us to the Vale of Alai.

If the Trans-Alai range had seemed on my earlier trip the most beautiful mountains I had ever seen, what were they now, veiled in the glories of sunset, after weeks of the desolate Pamirs! Far, far ahead and below us were hints of the green valley we should find at evening; about us were the peaks. Towering giants of snow in a range which reaches an elevation of 23,000 feet rose athwart lower cliffs of vivid red

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from which Kizil-art — Red Passage — takes its name. Down precipitous cliffs we saw the mountain rivers foaming over ledges. Again I marked where a red stream from the pass touched and entwined with a ghostly grey-green stream from hidden glaciers. Over this world of peaks and cliffs and valleys, the sun dropped slowly into the clouds of the west.

Down the pass Mamashef pushed our horses, taking each steep short cut and demanding that even on these our animals make speed. Often they must jump downward over uneven ledges, landing heavily with a force which it seemed to me accounted for saddle galls on Mamashef's beast. Just when I thought the last short cut ended, Mamashef, at a word from the Kashgarlik, left the trail entirely, saying that he was taking an abandoned trail which was much shorter. It was soon clear why this ancient trail was abandoned — places had fallen in and other places had been washed under turbulent streams. Into such streams we slid, sometimes at a steep diagonal, landing in opaque red waters foaming over rocks. Each time it seemed that only luck saved Alai from breaking a leg in the uncertain footing of the torrents, which he was forced to enter suddenly and blindly. Once on a steep sidehill where the trail entirely disappeared, Mamashef's horse slid downward several feet as the only means of descent. The Kashgarlik attempted a similar feat, but the horse fell sideways, spilling both baggage and rider.

Down such desperate slopes Mamashef demanded

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that I follow, saying harshly, with a curious reasoning: "I shall not tell you where to ride, for then if you fall I shall be responsible." I retorted sharply: "You are responsible anyway, for bringing me here." Many times I was three-fourths out of the saddle, and only by using the strength of both arms and pulling at the pommel could I lift myself into position again. I felt that the Kirghiz had a vindictive joy in forcing me through it. But now at last Alai showed the stuff he was made of, and vindicated my purchase. Though exhausted and trembling from stiff riding and long hunger, the beast stepped gingerly down the sliding hills better even than Mamashef's charger. Not once did he slide or fall. By his sureness of foot, combined with incredible luck, we came at sundown back on the road again.

The nomad life of pastures burst on us at once. We had descended far in the rough ravine; we emerged in thick waving grass. Not far away were flocks of sheep guarded by three Kirghiz. No such feed had our horses seen for a fortnight; they were wolf-like in their hunger. Only with struggle could I hold Alai in the road; whenever we stopped a moment he whirled me into the pastures, twisting viciously at my efforts to guide him forward. Mamashef stopped to speak with the Kirghiz, but ordered us to move on. Still down and down we rode into the dusk. Suddenly the Kashgarlik called on me to halt, and coming up he showed that my saddlebags had nearly fallen. The lunch we had eaten in the

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pass had changed their balance, and Mamashef, in replacing them, had carelessly omitted to fasten them. The jolting on the sidehills had loosened them; another minute and they would have fallen with a thud at Alai's feet. Alai had thrown me once, running from a displaced sheepskin; often I had seen him race madly from a saddle which fell from him too suddenly. When I considered what he would have done if sixty pounds of baggage had fallen on his feet, I thought (and I still think it likely) that the man who had stolen our horses had balanced the account by saving my bones.

For two hours of darkness we felt our way along the valley trail, through fords which grew ever deeper. Mamashef overtook us, bringing the three Kirghiz, who had offered to show him a site which they claimed better than Bordoba for both grass and water. They had chosen well, a spot where a cold, clear spring rose under sheltering cliffs amid abundant grass. We halted here as the moon rose. Mamashef showed me a small depression which would protect me from wind; he even helped me drag my baggage there. The Kashgarlik took my canteen and brought it filled with cold water. With our return to the Alai his change into a biddable guide seemed complete.

The visiting Kirghiz had brought fuel, and a fire was made for tea. I contributed the last of my sugar, my enameled cup, and the metal mug from my canteen. These were the only cups in the party; they

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took turns using them. Barely half an hour after our fire had been lighted, there rode up three G.P.U. men, who were patrolling the valley, and who wished to inquire what campers we were. They gave us news; the doctor and his wife were gone from Sary-tash, and so also was the Pasture Soviet. Only the trading post of the Gostorg was left, and the yurts of herdsmen.

Our famished horses were forced to stand more than an hour unfed in tall luscious grass, each tied by the head to the saddle of another. They stamped and tugged desperately at the fastenings. In the grey before dawn, when it came time to mount again, I found that Alai had torn his reins to pieces the night before and broken the iron of his bit. Mamashef seemed unconcerned; he put the bit in the dunnage and gave me a guide rope attached to one side of the horse's head. He pointed out that the Kashgarlik rode thus, and so could I. When I said that in such case I wished he would not leave me behind on the trail, he replied that we had only twenty-five kilometres to go, and nothing could happen to me now. Thereupon he galloped off ahead with the men of the G.P.U. He was soon out of sight.

Most of the trail was easy and we went swiftly, detained only by the horses' insistent hunger, unappeased by the feed of a single night. We met, however, two fairly serious hazards. We reached a swift red river, thick with mud which concealed its bottom. The horse of the Kashgarlik sank into

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it with such suddenness that he almost lost his footing, and then struggled forward through a stream which swirled about his haunches. Alai refused to follow, and at my insistence began to turn round in desperate circles. I called to the Kashgarlik to return, but his beast refused, and he himself showed no eagerness. At last I saw him ride off; at the same moment Alai, as little anxious as I was to be left, loped downstream and picked his own ford, a somewhat dangerous procedure. I had an anxious moment wondering at what depth he would find bottom, but he proved to have chosen a better crossing than that on the trail.

Half an hour later, while searching for Mamashef in one of the ravines which make up the encampment of Sary-tash, we found ourselves encircled by a bog. The Kashgarlik rode ahead, showing me a difficult but possible passage, and then went on without me, leaving me alone. Before me ran two parallel streams, each less than a yard wide, separated by a ridge which in turn was a yard in width. The banks of both streams caved into a bed some two feet deep. They were too wide to jump and too narrow and deep for a descent into their beds. Alai whirled and tossed angrily when I directed him towards this barrier.

Then, just as I realized that I was helpless in the midst of a bog, I heard voices calling in Russian. Three horsemen appeared, with young, kindly faces, and voices full of concern at my plight. They were the students from the Economic Institute of the

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Central Asian University whom I had met in the horse market at Osh and again in the Alai. After the mad three days with the angry, taciturn Kirghiz, I seemed to have come home suddenly to my own people.

"Hold tight to the saddle," said one, "and we'll get him across."

One went ahead, testing the way; the second followed, leading Alai; while the third rode behind, striking him briskly with a whip. Alai plunged, jumped, and tossed while I clung to the saddle. Soon we were over the streams on firm ground.

My new-found friends informed me that they were at that moment leaving the valley on their return to Gulcha. Their route would not be direct, but via many of the winter villages of Kirghiz. On learning my situation, they suggested that I go with them, unless I had need of speed. I replied that speed was the thing I had least need of; what I wanted was chiefly slowness and rest. My chief doubt was whether I could keep up with them, since they were leaving the Alai fresh, while I had traveled twenty-four kilometres that morning, and some two hundred kilometres in the past three days. I learned that the first day's trip would be four or five hours' slow going, and the next two days still shorter; after that they might make speed to Gulcha.

We found Mamashef; he announced that he intended to ride on at once to Gulcha without stopping for the rest at Sary-tash that he had promised. I replied that I had decided to leave him and go with

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the Economic Expedition. He approved my decision, saying politely that as a writer I would find the visits to the Kirghiz winter villages interesting. I answered equally politely that since he had brought me to the Alai so rapidly, I should now have time to make these extra visits.

There remained one brief and embarrassing matter of business — the note for fifty rubles I had from the Kashgarlik. In view of his many services as caravan man, I offered to remit fifteen rubles of it. He held out for twenty-five rubles, advancing a novel reason. "He says," interpreted Mamashef, "that since it cost us seventy-five rubles to get out of our difficulty, it is but fair that this be shared jointly. I have given twenty-five in my silk shirt and boots; he will give twenty-five, and you will give twenty-five. Thus you will return him the note for fifty rubles, and he will give you a new note for twenty-five rubles."

Here was the point where the East clashed with the West. I might perhaps have risen to twenty-five rubles for his services as guide, though the normal rate would be nearer fifteen. But this constant evasion of fact annoyed me, and I blurted out, "If Mamashef lost twenty-five rubles in clothes I am willing to share his loss, but why should I share the debt of a man who stole the horses and caused the whole trouble from the beginning?"

A shocked silence fell. The offense I had committed was unpardonable. Not in all our converse with the Kashgarlik had the word "theft" been

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mentioned. The Kashgarlik exploded into words. "He says that he did not steal the horses, but went to find them," interpreted Mamashef, adding: "It is very hard to say just what did occur. Those passes of the Pamirs are all alike. One might perhaps go as far as China, losing one's way."

As Mamashef said this with bland assurance, a light of relief sprang into the eyes of the Kashgarlik. He was restored; this tale would shield them both. I remembered that yurt, in such clear sight of the cairns that mark the Pamir Highway; not even I could lose the way. I remembered the heavy baggage left behind and my sheepskin taken, and the report Mamashef made of the conversation with Kirghiz at the Chinese frontier. Yet if these were all explained by the Kashgarlik's devoted search for our horses, why then the threatening trial at Murghabi, the willingness of the Kashgarlik to forfeit his horse, and the handsome sum we had paid the Kirghiz pursuers? Was this all real, or only a drama? Or were there still more complex deeps behind?

Looking back now, when exhaustion and anger are over, I see that Mamashef offered an easy way out of our problem, — a way that would harm no one, and that left the thief perhaps with a sense of failure, but with all his honor intact. But I was Western and could not take it. Thoroughly outraged, I put the note for fifty rubles back in my pocket. "I shall collect in full," I said, "when I come to Osh."

"And I," said my Russian rescuer, who was also

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Western, "will help you collect, if need be, through the police."

On this discordant note we took leave of Mamashef, not even stopping to drink tea. We gathered the broken bits of my reins from the pack of the Kashgarlik and went over the ridge to the yurt of the Russians, where I drank tea and milk while they fixed my harness. Yet in looking back at the mad three days I was driven along by the once-hospitable Kirghiz, I cannot really blame him. He came of a race whose women work harder than men and rank lower; no Western tradition of chivalry had marred that view. I had been handed to him by the post commander in a way that he could not refuse; and I, who might have refused to encumber him, had been singularly blind. Taking me along, as a piece of hindering baggage, he found that I brought bad luck; exactly how much he believed of this needs a psychoanalyst to fathom. After all this, he had offered me an equal share of the debts incurred in our transit, and I had thrown the word "theft" at the Kashgarlik.

Something like that he must have thought of me. As for his fall from legality in the matter of the horse theft, and the complications that followed—let any who have been lost in a wilderness like the Pamirs say what, under like conditions, they would do better.

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XIII

ONCE MORE IN SETTLED VALLEYS

THE trail leading out of the Alai which I took with the Economic Expedition from the University of Central Asia was not the wide caravan track by which I had formerly entered the valley, but a much wilder way leading by steep, rapid zigzags straight up for 3000 feet. Swiftly the green pastures, dotted with yurts, sank below us; at every turn, looking backward, we gained a wider sweep of distant streams and encampments. Across the valley, glittering in the morning sunlight, rose the giant snows of the Trans-Alai, behind which lay the Pamirs. I was through with them at last, and glad to be through with them. There was one pathway to India I should never try again.

Now at last began mountaineering as I loved it, equally removed from the daily dullness of caravan men with troops and the insane drive of the Kirghiz communist and Kashgar horse thief. Happy mountaineering, through Alpine meadows ablaze with flowers watered from snow fields, instead of the grey exhaustion of the High Pamirs. Yet that exhaustion still followed me, not to be lost for many days of easier going. The first day's trip was short for

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the Tashkent Expedition, but for me it was added to twenty-five kilometres already made that morning, and over two hundred in the past three days. My horse Alai was both tired and famished; his one night's feed had been inadequate to satisfy two weeks' hunger. As we zigzagged steeply up, the sweat poured from him, and he took advantage of my slightest inattention to grab mouthfuls of grass growing in the most dangerous corners. The struggle which this made necessary added to the weariness of both.

If the wider and better-graded caravan route from Osh to the Alai had been thronged by the camel expresses to Kashgar, this trail was a local traffic line for Kirghiz villages. Behind us in the wide Alai were their summer pastures; ahead of us over the range lay their winter homes. We met them now in groups: the men riding on horses, with family possessions, including babies, loaded on yaks. Fearsome beasts these seemed on a narrow trail, with their ponderous shoulders and wide-stretched horns; though, under direction, they were quite docile, yet turning out for them on a steep cliff was not easy.

At high noon we stood on the narrow knife edge of the pass, and saw beyond a world of purple ranges and deep green valleys. Dismounting, we sat for a time on the rocks and gazed backward, taking farewell of the great snow range which locked in its grasp the plateaus of the grey Pamir. Never, I mused, should I return to them. At this thought, in spite of

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past days of hardship, the glamour of mystery began again imperceptibly to enfold them, and slowly they became once more, not the heights of exhausted disillusion, but the still-unconquered mountain heart of Asia, alternately blazing and freezing, the forbidden frontier zone between two empires, each claiming the future of the world.

We turned and dropped rapidly down towards the valleys of the Kirghiz winter homes, by a trail too steep to ride. One of the Russians took charge of Alai, and gave me a stick to check my slipping on the swift descent. Down and down we went till my knees shook from bending, down one thousand feet, two thousand, three thousand, till we were as low as the Alai from which we had climbed. Here at the foot of the cliff I met for the first time the entire group of the Expedition, which had waited to rest and feed the horses. To it had been temporarily added my old acquaintance Kolpaief, and other Kirghiz of the now retiring Soviet of the High Pastures.

Still down we went, but not so steeply, by hillsides blazing with flowers, purple and red and blue and gold. Low stunted trees began to appear along our pathway, reminding us that for weeks we had been above the line of timber. Soon there came trees tall enough to cast a grateful shadow against the hot sun of the valleys. We came to clear streams and drank. At half-past three we reached a zimovka, whose name, as nearly as I can spell it from the sound, was Chilok Bos.

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Chilok Bos consisted of some threescore structures, built of mud bricks and sprawled in a ravine amid tangled fields of barley. Among the dwellings were not more than ten inhabitants; the rest were away in the summer pastures. They left their barley fields to grow as nature bade them, as a supplementary winter ration for live stock. After a short consultation it was decided to leave only two men for the night at Chilok Bos and to scatter the rest among other zimovkas, that research might proceed as fast as possible. The party of a dozen men was split into several groups, each assigned to cover certain valleys, meeting each other from time to time, and all assembling two nights later at a large zimovka further down the valley, from which they would go to Gulcha. Since I was tired, I chose to stay at the first stop, Chilok Bos, and found as my companions Alexander Belof and Stepan Khlynovski, a statistician and an economist, two of those who had rescued me from the swamp in the morning.

Never shall I forget the kindness of these men, and in fact of all the Economic Expedition. Already that morning they had relieved Alai of my heavy saddlebags, distributing them among the fresher beasts. Now they brought armfuls of hay and heaped them in a Kirghiz hut to make a bed for me; they showed me a trickle of water sheltered by bushes, where I might bathe and rest while they did their day's assignment. They were listing the number and location of buildings in the zimovka, and the names,

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status, and possessions of the owners, securing the information from one of the local residents. Almost till sunset they climbed among the mud hovels, through barley fields and up the little stream, making rough maps of the location of buildings and their relation to the primitive irrigation system which carried melting snows to the fields. To my inexperienced eye there was nothing to see in this village, except two laborers making bricks of sun-dried clay and carting them a short distance on a sloping board without wheels, drawn by a horse. This seemed worth photographing.

That evening as we sat by a fire which Belof kindled in the rude fireplace of the Kirghiz hut, and feasted on cold meat, real bread, and tea and surmé, they told me the results of the afternoon's study.

"You note," said Belof, "how all the buildings are placed close to the steepest hillside, to protect them from snowdrift and winds."

Thus he showed me the plan behind what seemed confusion.

"The structures you see," he added, "are chiefly shelters for cattle. We have listed the families in this zimovka, and find that less than half have dwellings for human beings. The majority live in the yurts which they bring back from the high pastures. All of them have shelter for the beasts by which they live, but only the richest have mud huts for themselves. The eight or ten persons here now are all poor men — laborers working for richer men who

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have gone to the Alai. They repair houses and look after fields and make brick for their masters. They own perhaps two or three animals, which their master takes for them to the Alai. In this the Kirghiz differ from settled peoples, among whom poor men are hired to care for the flocks of others and take them to the hills. Among the Kirghiz, on the contrary, the poor men are hired to stay at home and do the work of settled habitations. No one who can afford it misses the long, lazy summer in the high pastures, where they meet friends from a dozen zimovkas, where they hold festivals and weddings and go hunting, entertaining and being entertained."

Very early I curled in my sleeping bag to watch the dying fire, while the men worked over maps and statistics by candlelight in the other room. The possession of two rooms was a sharp sign of our return to civilization.

Lazily, at nine the next morning, the twentieth of July, we left Chilok Bos and rode through tall grass and waving flowers over a low divide and down to a river bed which was now quite dry. Continuing up the shore of this empty stream, we came at last to a tiny trickle of water, which steadily increased in size. What manner of river was this which grew larger towards the source? Belof explained that the Kirghiz were drawing off the waters to irrigate. In the spring the waters are high and follow the river bed to its end in the larger Gulcha River. But in mid-

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July there is only enough water to irrigate the upper valley; none escapes to the river course below.

At the end of the trail we came to the zimovka Jagach Art, consisting of scattered mud shelters belonging to seventeen households, lying in a lush green valley exquisitely choked with flowers. Numbers of wild bees gorged themselves with sweetness; and I wondered why the Kirghiz do not add bees to their live stock, securing honey as a substitute for the much-desired sugar they seldom see. Several men came from a cluster of buildings, curious to know our business. The day was already hot, so we gathered inside a low enclosure used in winter as a stable — a spacious place, reaching out of sight in the cool darkness, where many beasts might shelter within clay walls against the snow.

Here a long discussion took place, waxing at one time so violent that Belof parted the contestants with soothing words. One of the men, it seemed, resented his questions, thinking them the precursor of some new taxation. Another explained that if new taxation came, it would not affect them, the poor laborers, but only their masters who owned many sheep. Therefore let all aid be given the honorable one from Tashkent, whose new government helps the poor. It was at this point that politics brought violence into the discussion; the class war among the Kirghiz was on. It was temporarily allayed when Belof explained that he had nothing to do with any taxing department, a statement which the Kirghiz took with puzzled half-

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acceptance. What else indeed could he possibly have come for, asking all these questions about property?

In the afternoon we retraced our trail and came to the main caravan track between Osh and the Alai. The sun burned fiercely; the flies tormented our horses; we passed long caravans, and the dust from many camels parched our throats. Within two hours we reached the Gulcha River, at the point where the main road crosses and climbs through the red pass of Kizil-beless. Here we left the caravan track and took a rocky trail down the river bed, under picturesque cliffs of red rock, trimmed with ledges of green grass. A breeze followed the rushing waters and brought relief from the stifling day. After another hour we reached a break in the bank and were hailed by a member of the Expedition, who told us our way lay up this side ravine to the zimovka of Kugande.

All night and till the next afternoon we camped in Kugande. Except for one lack, no better or more charming summer camp site could be imagined. Low under wooded mountains nestled ten structures of sun-dried brick; around them waved plentiful fields of barley; beyond were green dells of flowering pasture. Kugande lacked one essential — there was no water. The rushing Gulcha River, which we had left two kilometres behind, was the nearest stream. This was a common deficiency in many zimovkas. In Chilok Bos and Jagach Art the streams were scant and would clearly dry in August; in other zimovkas they had disappeared in July. Tormented by

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heat and thirst, I berated a people, presumably skilled in camping, who could thus place their dwellings.

"Water is not their first need in winter," explained Belof and Khlynovski. "In winter all streams freeze and they secure water by melting snow, which is plentiful everywhere. Their chief needs then are shelter from wind, and grassy hillsides where snow blows off and food can be reached by sheep even under light snow. These grassy hills are better than watercourses, where usually the snow lies deepest. As spring advances, water is found everywhere at the foot of melting snow banks. Before the larger drifts have gone from shaded ravines, the Kirghiz move to the summer pastures, only to return with the first autumn snow. The few men left in the zimovkas in summer are poor laborers, whose time spent in carrying water is not considered."

Though Kugande was only a small zimovka, the Expedition gave it intensive study, for they had met its inhabitants in the Alai pastures and secured from them family budgets and descriptions of landholdings. These they now checked by careful measurement in order to learn what area of land a Kirghiz meant by "one cheksi," or "one cheicrek." A "cheksi," I learned, is a weight measure of about thirteen pounds, and a cheksi of land is the amount of land that can be sown by thirteen pounds of barley. A "cheicrek" is a "horse load"; and a cheicrek of land is the amount that can be sown by a "horse load of barley," which is presumably just under two hundred

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pounds. Thus pleasantly vague is Kirghiz farm measurement, which these young scientists were trying to reduce to statistics. To this end they measured barley plots all afternoon and next morning in an exhausting heat.

A Kirghiz from the Alai had traveled with us, bringing a sheep which the Expedition had bought from him and which he had agreed to carry as far as Kugande. He slaughtered it now, receiving the skin for his labor as butcher; it was this, in fact, that had brought him from the Alai. While the sheep was cooking, the statistician and economist rested with me on the verandah of one of the mud dwellings, and gave me samples of Kirghiz budgets and living standards.

All the families in Kugande, they told me, were related to each other; there were four brothers and their three cousins. None of these families possessed a dwelling house. They had spacious stables for their animals, and hard raised platforms of beaten earth on which their yurts would be lifted above the snow. Yet there were three dwelling houses in the village, in one of which we ourselves had camped for the night. These were "guest houses," belonging to all in common — "hotels" in which to house their many visitors. Each of these three hotels had two rooms and a covered verandah where a horse might be unloaded under shelter. This tiny village, with no houses at all for its citizens, had yet six rooms for the entertainment of friends! Such is hospitality

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among the Kirghiz; in winter as well as summer their life consists of visiting and being visited.

Though the seven families in Kugande were related to each other, yet some were richer and some poorer. Variations in shrewdness or in the fortunes of the flock had already begun a differentiation of property. Brother worked for brother, receiving wages in kind or in money. But the guest houses, the hospitable drink of koumiss, and the summer transport to the high pastures were held in common. When the trek was made in spring to the Vale of Alai, the horses and yaks of all were used to carry everyone, just as, in a distant land beyond the ocean, the family automobile carries all relatives. Such was the information the Expedition had gathered from the Kirghiz of Kugande whom they had met in the Alai.

During our conversation I learned that Khlynovski, who had been so meekly measuring barley fields all morning, had during the civil war been a commander of importance, the chief of operations on the whole front against the basmachi guerrillas of Central Asia. When the war ended, he went back to studies of economics and was now specializing on the Kirghiz; his military life had given him a liking for camping in the high valleys.

He brought out sheafs of family budgets obtained from the Kirghiz. "Here," he said, "is a budget typical of a moderately prosperous Kirghiz. They are a family of nine persons living in one yurt. At

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the beginning of the year they owned 140 animals, of which 9 were horses, 6 were cows or yaks, 125 were sheep. There was one camel. At the end of the year their live stock had increased to 164 head, consisting of 11 horses, 8 cows or yaks, 2 camels, and 143 sheep. Most of this was natural increase; but the camel was bought. All Kirghiz live stock is now increasing; it was badly hit by war, but has been recovering during the past few years of peace."

Khlynovski brought out the money budget of this family for a year, consisting of only 600 rubles. The chief items of income were 365 rubles received from sales of sheep, and somewhat more than 100 rubles from government organizations to which they furnished transport animals. The chief expenditures were the 200 rubles for a camel, 125 rubles for wheat, 47 rubles for dry goods, and 102 rubles for taxes — the latter including market fees for sale of sheep and the pasture tax of 15 kopeks a head for small animals and 40 kopeks for large ones. If the tax seems an undue percentage of a small income, it must be remembered that the 600 rubles received in money was only a small part of the total income of the family. Most of their food, clothing, and shelter was independent of money.

The "food sheet" of this family was next shown me. In a year these nine persons consumed 3530 kilogrammes of airann — nearly four tons. This was more than a kilogramme per day per person — by far the largest item on their food sheet. Other

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milk products included sixty-five kilogrammes of greasy keimak and sixty-five kilogrammes of curd. There was also drunk 1900 kilogrammes of koumiss, making a total of four pounds, or nearly two kilogrammes per day per person of milk products. With meat they were much less lavish, for meat depletes the flock and is eaten only on feast days; ninety-five kilogrammes went into the yearly menu, a pound for every person once in two weeks. Only twenty kilogrammes of lard and eleven of butter were eaten by the family in the year; their fat ration was consumed rather in the form of airann or keimak.

This Kirghiz family, however, was growing civilized and trading with the farmers of the valleys, as was shown by the large expenditure for wheat and the amount of it eaten. Flour ranked next to milk in the diet, 2100 kilogrammes of it having been consumed by the family during the year. Reckoned by weight, it was about one third as much as the milk, but it was an amount not to be despised, being nearly a pound and a half of bread per day per person, which is less than the average bread diet of Russian peasants to-day, but more than they ate before the war.[1] Clearly this family had abandoned the purely nomad diet. Eight pounds of tea they also bought from the trading towns. But not an ounce of sugar was given in the budget, and no vegetables or fruits.

[1] Government estimates give 396 pounds (English weight) per year per peasant before the war, and 792 pounds in 1929.

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"We offered them a large chunk[1] of sugar in return for their hospitality," said Khlynovski. "The old man took it, gave it a couple of licks, and passed it to his wife. She also licked it twice, then put it away in her bosom, patting it like a cherished child." . . . So scarce and prized is sugar among the Kirghiz.

Khlynovski also told me that in making family budgets among Kirghiz, it was hard to get an estimate of the cost of anything into which entered the work of women. "No Kirghiz considers the work of women worth counting, though they do all the labor on which his existence depends. They not only milk the ewes and make the airann, but they make the household containers from sheep's entrails. They roll the felt of which the yurt is built. Yet when you ask a Kirghiz what his yurt cost him, he estimates the market cost of the bare wool that went into it. The labor of many women occupied for weeks in rolling felt and fastening it together, sometimes in elaborate decorative patterns, enters not into the calculations."

In mid-afternoon we left the idyllic glen of Kugande and rode again down river, meeting as we went other sections of the Expedition, who were gathering for the night at Kurgak Ata. By hard-found tracks in the hills and through fords we reached it — a beautiful site with the rare blessing of clear cold water. The scattered groups arrived one after

[1] The typical Russian sugar comes not in small cubes but in massive chunks, refined to marble hardness.

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another; tea and bread and meat were served to all. Our group had brought the meat; for this had the sheep been slaughtered and boiled at Kugande, since our trip was easiest and shortest. Others had climbed steep passes to zimovkas in hidden valleys and returned by dangerous trails. Late into the night the leaders of various groups compared notes by the flicker of candles, while all about, on earthen floors of verandahs, we less responsible ones lay sleeping under a large late moon. The survey of zimovkas for this region was declared completed; on the morrow we would make a long, swift march to Gulcha.

Thus I returned by caravan track to Gulcha, which I had first entered a month before, footsore and mud-soaked from the swamp where Alai threw me, and which I had left with another scientific expedition of Russians, bound for gold in the Pamirs. We made a long, hard ride, from early dawn till sunset. Again we came to the post of Sufi-Kurgan, and registered as leaving the "forbidden frontier zone." Again we splashed through fords of the Gulcha River, plunging deeper and deeper till at last we came to bridges. We stopped for noonday rest at the ruined stable where formerly I had met Professor Vaviloff bound for Kashgar, on his quest for wheat growing wild in Chinese Turkestan. In late afternoon we came to a gang of surveyors, measuring the caravan track which was to be made an auto road to the Chinese frontier town of Irkestan.

The glow of sunset brooded over wide valleys at

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Gulcha, turning the river into a gleaming thread of gold. It glorified from afar what I knew was only a muddy, comfortless town — but, for all that, a trading town where one might order plov. Telegrams could be sent, and letters which would reach Moscow in something less than the two months required from Murghabi. The Red Chai-khana whose host had lent me his own sleeping pallet was closed now; they said it was bankrupt, unable to compete with the ancient privately owned chai-khanas that stood alongside. The reason for this lay in the fact that the private chai-khana had stables, which are far more important to a caravan than good cheer. The Red Chai-khana had no accommodations for horses; perhaps since that time it has been allowed to commandeer those of its neighbor. In any case I much regretted its passing, for the private chai-khana where we spent the night provided more bugs than I have ever encountered anywhere in the course of many wanderings across the continent of Asia. None of the primitive Kirghiz, whose quilts are used by all comers, had offered the acute discomfort of this caravanserai at Gulcha. Such was our welcome back to civilization.

Two days still remained to reach the railroad. The expedition planned to go not via Osh, but by Pokrovskaia, a large village of Russian pioneers whose economy also they were to study. No one had record of its distance from Gulcha, for we went by mountain trails unknown to caravans; it took from

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dawn till after sunset. Of this day also might be told a tale of adventure, for the steep paths over the rocky ridges offered more perils than better-known tracks in the heights. The swift deep ford of the Gulcha River, in which our horses were carried downstream in a sharp diagonal while crossing; the sharp uneven ridges between irrigation ditches along which we picked our way till they sank beneath us into mud; the interminable ascents and descents from one deep valley to another deep valley; the narrow cliff trail where Alai made one last attempt to brush me off his back with a thousand-foot drop below — all these indicated that if we had at last reached settled valleys we had not yet found settled roads.

Before reaching Pokrovskaia we passed through a Kirghiz village, straggling for several miles along our road and showing evidences of completely settled culture. Tall trees shaded the irrigation ditches; behind mud walls which concealed the households we caught evidence of many orchards. One clever peasant was reclining on a roof garden, under a second roof of thatch supported only by posts; thus he took the cool of all the breezes without the sun. Many of the houses were so pretentious that we several times believed we had reached the Russian village Pokrovskaia, only to find that the dwellers were Kirghiz. The few yurts of which I caught a glimpse, in well-walled courtyards, seemed to be rather the centre of garden picnics than the permanent abode. This ancient traveling home of a people whose known

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history reaches two thousand years across the continent of Asia was relegated to a shady playhouse for the children.

Two hours after dark we reached Pokrovskaia, and camped in the court of a peasant, on piles of hay. The following day I moved to the empty schoolhouse, as guest of one of the teachers, who offered me the bed of another teacher, now off on summer vacation. I learned that Pokrovskaia is a large village with some three hundred children in its school. The county (Okrug) paid last year for seven teachers; but the voluntary association of parents and local citizens raised money to pay for an eighth, finding this better and cheaper than to send their children away to the town for higher study. So the seven-grade school had become last year an eight-grade school, and would have this autumn, by promotion, the full nine grades needed for those who wished to enter high technical schools elsewhere. The county had agreed to pay in the autumn for the eighth teacher, whereupon the local parents would pay for a ninth. My teacher hostess came from European Russia, but told me that wages in these distant villages are made higher than elsewhere to offset the inconveniences. It is also a practice to require some such service of graduates in return for the state stipend they receive as students. Hence teaching at Pokrovskaia, she assured me, was not inferior to villages much nearer the centre.

Behind the school was a large and ragged orchard,

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in which I rested often during the noonday heat in the three days I spent in Pokrovskaia. Formerly the property of a landowner, it had been given to the school for income. There were many other orchards in the village; the irrigated soil was too valuable for wheat. The wide streets, from which every passing wagon at this season raised great clouds of dust, were thickly shaded. The village had a post office and a savings bank, and seemed in many ways better built and more progressive than an average village of its size in European Russia. This I have often found true of Russian villages in Asia; like the pioneers of America's western plains, they show more energy than the peasants they left behind. The cause in both cases is the same: new soil, under new conditions, conquered by the younger and more daring elements of the nation.

In Pokrovskaia we arranged for a peasant to heat his Russian bath, and soaked ourselves in turn with hot water. I sold my sheepskin to another peasant for thirteen rubles, losing twelve by the transaction — a small rental indeed to pay for its use in the grey Pamir. The Expedition sent its extra baggage horses, no longer needed for work in the lowlands, to the horse market of Osh; Alai went with them, bringing a hundred rubles less than I had paid in the same market, when he was in better condition. The representative of the Expedition who took the horses took also my receipt for fifty rubles due from the Kashgarlik, and eventually collected it, sending it

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to me in Moscow. Thus gradually we settled accounts and got rid of encumbrances, resting thankfully in the welcome shade of the trees of Pokrovskaia.

On the third day I left Pokrovskaia before dawn in the post wagon, riding high on sacks of mail and green piles of horse feed, and wearing no longer the riding clothes of the mountains, but the thinnest of summer dresses. We passed on our road many small new settlements, Russian, Uzbek, and Kirghiz — collective farming groups, chiefly of young families, who had left older settlements, such as Pokrovskaia, and taken up land in common with the aid of government loans. New barns, new houses, were in process of building. Over many ridges and valleys in this still-unconquered wilderness we came at last to a height whence we saw a green town by a river and railroad, our destination, Kara-su. We reached it shortly after nine o'clock, before the full heat of the day struck us.

Here was rail connection to Andizhan and Tashkent, to Moscow and all the world beyond. Here was an Asian bazaar full of melons, on which I quenched my thirst while waiting for the midnight train. Here East and West were mingled; I left my baggage in an ancient chai-khana, and rested there uncomfortably on thinly carpeted boards during the breathless heat; but I lunched in a neat little coöperative restaurant of the railway workers which served *shchi* and *shashlik* precisely as they

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are served from the Baltic to the Pacific in every town of Russia. Here also I obtained ice-cold *Narzan,* the mineral water from the far-away Caucasus, bottled and sold by the Russian Health Department. I had come again to standardized civilization, almost as standardized as that of America, but on a different pattern.

I cooled myself in the afternoon by a bath in the "Dark Waters," the swift muddy river Kara-su from which the town takes its name. Sitting on hard earth banks, I watched the water wheels endlessly turning, lifting water for irrigation by a method I had seen in China, and which is almost as old as human farming. But when I left the river to find my way to the railway, I stumbled by chance into a Tractor Station, where several-score machines awaited their turn for repairs after the summer's work and before fall ploughing. I heard the same slogans of mechanized farming, and of "bringing organization to the masses," that one can hear five thousand kilometres northwest near Leningrad, or five thousand kilometres northeast near Vladivostok.

In which of these directions should I go next, since all of them lay open? I thought of Shatoff, whom I had promised to visit at Alma Ata, to see the new railroad driving north from Turkestan to Siberia. I thought of Dushembe, capital of the new Tadjik Republic, which I had failed to visit by return trip from the Pamirs, but which was still accessible by

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airplane, and would be soon by rail.[1] But these places, one to the north and one to the south, were both in the hot lowlands of Asia, and I was weary of heat. I was too weary even to think of serious trips to factories and farms in Russia; the trip to the Pamirs had exhausted me; I had lost thirty pounds in six weeks. So I turned towards the health resorts of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, the mineral baths, the salt-water bathing, the walks under trees in gentle sea-level air. I decided to go four thousand kilometres northwest to Moscow, and thence two thousand kilometres south to Sochi by the sea. That seven-day trip across half of two continents took no longer than it had taken to ride from Osh to the Alai, or from the yurts of Sary-tash to Murghabi, the capital of the grey Pamir.

[1] Rail service to Dushembe opened in October 1929; The Turkestan–Siberian Railway opened May 1, 1930.

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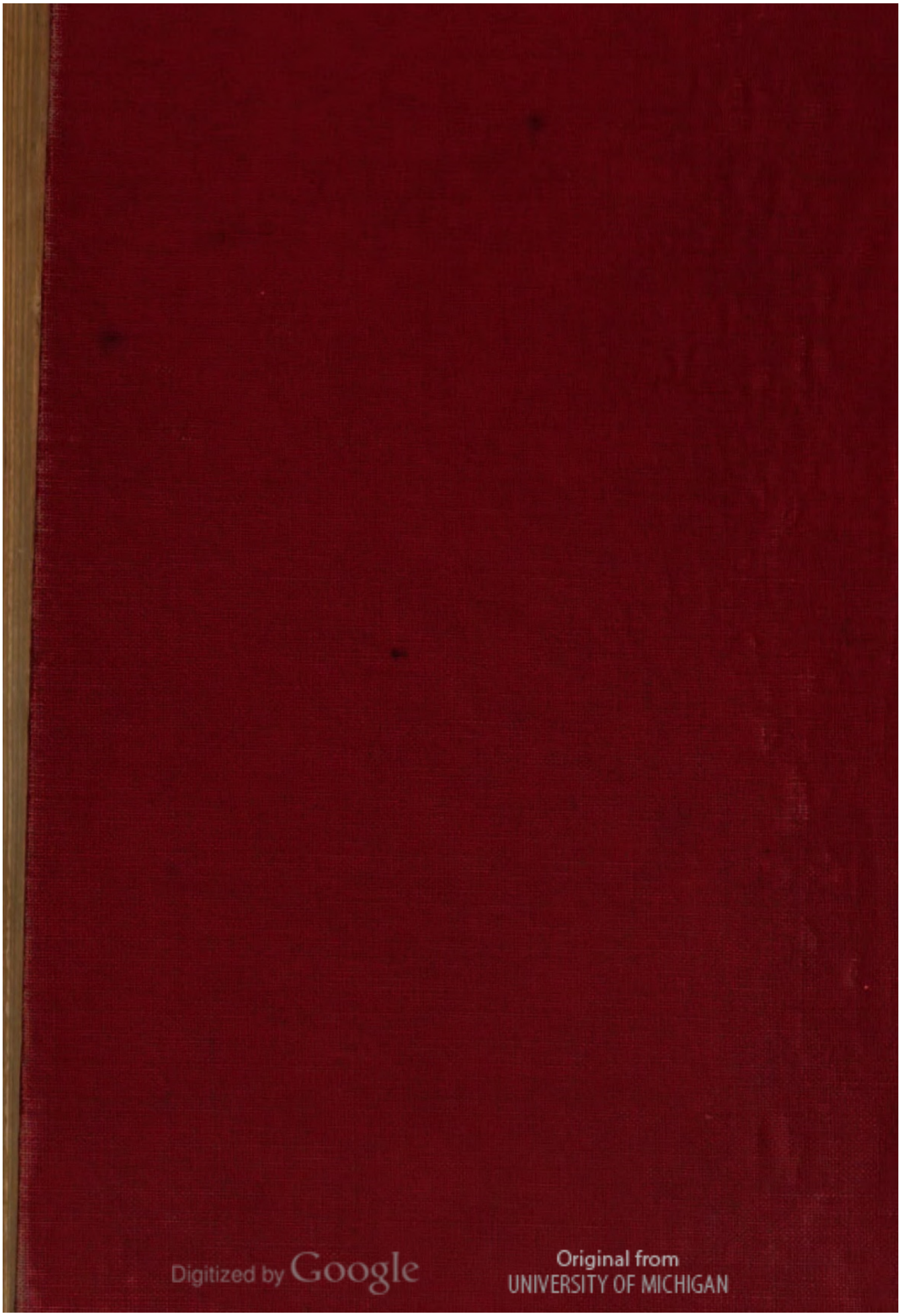
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